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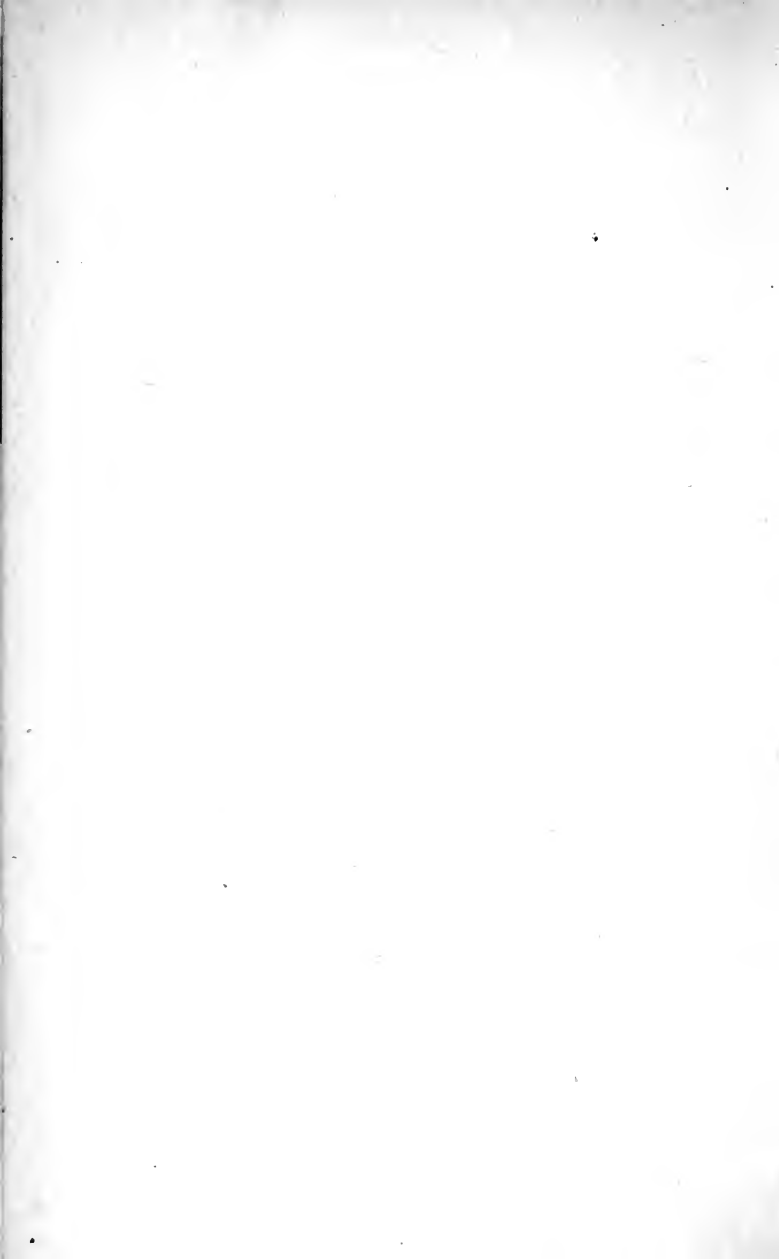
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THE LEGACY OF CAIN.

VOL. III.

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THE LEGACY OF CAIN

BY
WILKIE COLLINS



IN THREE VOLUMES
VOL. III.

London
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1889

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Second Period (*continued*).

*EVENTS IN THE FAMILY, RELATED BY THE
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CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE PAST.

AFTER having identified my handwriting, I waited with some curiosity to see whether Helena would let her anger honestly show itself, or whether she would keep it down. She kept it down.

‘Allow me to return good for evil.’ (The evil was uppermost, nevertheless, when Miss Gracedieu expressed herself in these self-denying terms.) ‘You are no doubt anxious to know if Philip’s father has been won over to serve your purpose. Here is Philip’s own account of it; the last of his letters that I shall trouble you to read.’

I looked it over. The memorandum follows which I made for my own use :

An eccentric philosopher is as capable as the most commonplace human being in existence of behaving like an honourable man. Mr. Dunboyne read the letter which bore the Minister's signature, and handed it to his son. 'Can you answer that?' was all he said. Philip's silence confessed that he was unable to answer it—and Philip himself, I may add, rose accordingly in my estimation. His father pointed to the writing-desk. 'I must spare my cramped hand,' the philosopher resumed, 'and I must answer Mr. Gracedieu's letter. Write, and leave a place for my signature.' He began to dictate his reply. 'Sir,—My son Philip has seen your letter, and has no defence to make. In this respect he has set an example of candour, which I propose to follow. There is no excuse for him. What I can do to show that I feel for you, and agree with you, shall

be done. At the age which this young man has reached, the laws of England abolish the authority of his father. If he is sufficiently infatuated to place his honour and his happiness at the mercy of a lady, who has behaved to her sister as your daughter has behaved to Miss Eunice, I warn the married couple not to expect a farthing of my money, either during my lifetime or after my death. Your faithful servant, DUNBOYNE, SENIOR.' Having performed his duty as secretary, Philip received his dismissal: 'You may send my reply to the post,' his father said; 'and you may keep Mr. Gracedieu's letter. Morally speaking, I regard that last document as a species of mirror, in which a young gentleman like yourself may see how ugly he looks.' This, Philip declared, was his father's form of farewell.

I handed back the letter to Helena. Not a word passed between us. In sinister silence

she opened the door and left me alone in the room.

That Mrs. Gracedieu and I had met in the bygone time, and—this was the only serious part of it—had met in secret, would now be made known to the Minister. Was I to blame for having shrunk from distressing my good friend, by telling him that his wife had privately consulted me on the means of removing his adopted child from his house? And, even if I had been cruel enough to do this, would he have believed my statement against the positive denial with which the woman whom he loved and trusted would have certainly met it? No! let the consequences of the coming disclosure be what they might, I failed to see any valid reason for regretting my conduct in the past time.

I found Miss Jillgall waiting in the passage to see me come out.

Before I could tell her what had happened,

there was a ring at the house-bell. The visitor proved to be Mr. Wellwood, the doctor. I was anxious to speak to him on the subject of Mr. Gracedieu's health. Miss Jillgall introduced me, as an old and dear friend of the Minister, and left us together in the dining-room.

‘What do I think of Mr. Gracedieu?’ he said, repeating the first question that I put. ‘Well, sir, I think badly of him.’

Entering into details, after that ominous reply, Mr. Wellwood did not hesitate to say that his patient's nerves were completely shattered. Disease of the brain had, as he feared, been already set up. ‘As to the causes which have produced this lamentable break-down,’ the doctor continued, ‘Mr. Gracedieu has been in the habit of preaching extempore twice a day on Sundays, and sometimes in the week as well—and has uniformly refused to spare himself when he was in most urgent need of

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rest. If you have ever attended his chapel, you have seen a man in a state of fiery enthusiasm, feeling intensely every word that he utters. Think of such exhaustion as that implies going on for years together, and accumulating its wasting influences on a sensitively-organized constitution. Add that he is tormented by personal anxieties, which he confesses to no one, not even to his own children—and the sum of it all is that a worse case of its kind, I am grieved to say, has never occurred in my experience.'

Before the doctor left me to go to his patient, I asked leave to occupy a minute more of his time. My object was, of course, to speak about Eunice.

The change of subject seemed to be agreeable to Mr. Wellwood. He smiled good-humouredly.

'You need feel no alarm about the health of that interesting girl,' he said. 'When she

complained to me—at her age !—of not being able to sleep, I should have taken it more seriously if I had been told that she too had her troubles, poor little soul. Love-troubles, most likely—but don't forget that my professional limits keep me in the dark ! Have you heard that she took some composing medicine, which I had prescribed for her father ? The effect (certain, in any case, to be injurious to a young girl) was considerably aggravated by the state of her mind at the time. A dream that frightened her, and something resembling delirium, seems to have followed. And she made matters worse, poor child, by writing in her diary about the visions and supernatural appearances that had terrified her. I was afraid of fever, on the day when they first sent for me. We escaped that complication, and I was at liberty to try the best of all remedies—quiet and change of air. I have no fears for Miss Eunice.'

With that cheering reply he went up to the Minister's room.

All that I had found perplexing in Eunice was now made clear. I understood how her agony at the loss of her lover, and her keen sense of the wrong that she had suffered, had been strengthened in their disastrous influence by her experiment on the sleeping draught intended for her father. In mind and body, both, the poor girl was in the condition which offered its opportunity to the lurking hereditary taint. It was terrible to think of what might have happened, if the all-powerful counter-influence had not been present to save her.

Before I had been long alone the servant-maid came in, and said the doctor wanted to see me.

Mr. Wellwood was waiting in the passage, outside the Minister's bedchamber. He asked if he could speak to me without interruption, and without the fear of being overheard. I

led him at once to the room which I occupied as a guest.

‘At the very time when it is most important to keep Mr. Gracedieu quiet,’ he said, ‘something has happened to excite—I might almost say to infuriate him. He has left his bed, and is walking up and down the room; and, I don’t scruple to say, he is on the verge of madness. He insists on seeing you. Being wholly unable to control him in any other way, I have consented to this. But I must not allow you to place yourself in what may be a disagreeable position, without a word of warning. Judging by his tones and his looks, he seems to have no very friendly motive for wishing to see you.’

Knowing perfectly well what had happened, and being one of those impatient people who can never endure suspense, I offered to go at once to Mr. Gracedieu’s room. The doctor asked leave to say one word more.

‘Pray be careful that you neither say nor do anything to thwart him,’ Mr. Wellwood resumed. ‘If he expresses an opinion, agree with him. If he is insolent and overbearing, don’t answer him. In the state of his brain, the one hopeful course to take is to let him have his own way. Pray remember that. I will be within call, in case of your wanting me.’

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FATAL PORTRAIT.

I KNOCKED at the bedroom door.

‘ Who’s there ?’

Only two words—but the voice that uttered them, hoarse and peremptory, was altered almost beyond recognition. If I had not known whose room it was, I might have doubted whether the Minister had really spoken to me.

At the instant when I answered him, I was allowed to pass in. Having admitted me, he closed the door, and placed himself with his back against it. The customary pallor of his face had darkened to a deep red ; there was an

expression of ferocious mockery in his eyes. Helena's vengeance had hurt her unhappy father far more severely than it seemed likely to hurt me. The doctor had said he was on the verge of madness. To my thinking, he had already passed the boundary line.

He received me with a boisterous affectation of cordiality.

‘My excellent friend! My admirable, honourable, welcome guest, you don't know how glad I am to see you. Stand a little nearer to the light; I want to admire you.’

Remembering the doctor's advice, I obeyed him in silence.

‘Ah, you were a handsome fellow when I first knew you,’ he said, ‘and you have some remains of it still left. Do you remember the time when you were a favourite with the ladies? Oh, don't pretend to be modest; don't turn your back, now you are old, on

what you were in the prime of your life. Do you own that I am right ?

What his object might be in saying this—if, indeed, he had an object—it was impossible to guess. The doctor's advice left me no alternative ; I hastened to own that he was right. As I made that answer, I observed that he held something in his hand which was half hidden up the sleeve of his dressing-gown. What the nature of the object was I failed to discover.

‘ And when I happened to speak of you somewhere,’ he went on, ‘ I forget where—a member of my congregation—I don't recollect who it was—told me you were connected with the aristocracy. How were you connected ?’

He surprised me ; but, however he had got his information, he had not been deceived. I told him that I was connected, through my mother, with the family to which he had alluded.

‘ The aristocracy !’ he repeated. ‘ A race of

people who are rich, without earning their money, and noble because their great-grand-fathers were noble before them. They live in idleness and luxury—profligates who gratify their passions without shame and without remorse. Deny, if you dare, that this is a true description of them.’

It was really pitiable. Heartily sorry for him, I pacified him again.

‘And don’t suppose I forget that you are one of them. Do you hear me, my noble friend?’

There was no help for it—I made another conciliatory reply.

‘So far,’ he resumed, ‘I don’t complain of you. You have not attempted to deceive me—yet. Absolute silence is what I require next. Though you may not suspect it, my mind is in a ferment; I must try to think.’

To some extent at least, his thoughts betrayed themselves in his actions. He put

the object that I had half seen in his hand into the pocket of his dressing-gown, and moved to the toilet-table. Opening one of the drawers, he took from it a folded sheet of paper, and came back to me.

‘A minister of the Gospel,’ he said, ‘is a sacred man, and has a horror of crime. You are safe, so far—provided you obey me. I have a solemn and terrible duty to perform. This is not the right place for it. Follow me downstairs.’

He led the way out. The doctor, waiting in the passage, was not near the stairs, and so escaped notice. ‘What is it?’ Mr. Wellwood whispered. In the same guarded way, I said: ‘He has not told me yet; I have been careful not to irritate him.’ When we descended the stairs, the doctor followed us at a safe distance. He mended his pace when the Minister opened the door of the study, and when he saw us both pass in. Before he could follow, the door was closed and locked in his face. Mr. Grace-

dieu took out the key and threw it, through the open window, into the garden below.

Turning back into the room, he laid the folded sheet of paper on the table. That done, he spoke to me.

‘I distrust my own weakness,’ he said. ‘A dreadful necessity confronts me — I might shrink from the horrid idea, and, if I could open the door, might try to get away. Escape is impossible now. We are prisoners together. But don’t suppose that we are alone. There is a third person present, who will judge between you and me. Look there!’

He pointed solemnly to the portrait of his wife. It was a small picture, very simply framed; representing the face in a ‘three-quarter’ view, and part of the figure only. As a work of art it was contemptible; but, as a likeness, it answered its purpose. My unhappy friend stood before it, in an attitude of dejection, covering his face with his hands.

In the interval of silence that followed, I was reminded that an unseen friend was keeping watch outside.

Alarmed by having heard the key turned in the lock, and realizing the embarrassment of the position in which I was placed, the doctor had discovered a discreet way of communicating with me. He slipped one of his visiting-cards under the door, with these words written on it: ‘How can I help you?’

I took the pencil from my pocket-book, and wrote on the blank side of the card: ‘He has thrown the key into the garden ; look for it under the window.’ A glance at the Minister, before I returned my reply, showed that his attitude was unchanged. Without being seen or suspected, I, in my turn, slipped the card under the door.

The slow minutes followed each other—and still nothing happened.

My anxiety to see how the doctor’s search

for the key was succeeding, tempted me to approach the window. On my way to it, the tail of my coat threw down a little tray containing pens and pencils, which had been left close to the edge of the table. Slight as the noise of the fall was, it disturbed Mr. Gracedieu. He looked round vacantly.

‘I have been comforted by prayer,’ he told me. ‘The weakness of poor humanity has found strength in the Lord.’ He pointed to the portrait once more : ‘My hands must not presume to touch it, while I am still in doubt. Take it down.’

I removed the picture and placed it, by his directions, on a chair that stood midway between us. To my surprise his tones faltered ; I saw tears rising in his eyes. ‘You may think you see a picture there,’ he said. ‘You are wrong. You see my wife herself. Stand here, and look at my wife with me.’

We stood together, with our eyes fixed on the portrait.

Without anything said or done on my part to irritate him, he suddenly turned to me in a state of furious rage. 'Not a sign of sorrow!' he burst out. 'Not a blush of shame! Wretch, you stand condemned by the atrocious composure that I see in your face!'

A first discovery of the odious suspicion of which I was the object, dawned on my mind at that moment. My capacity for restraining myself completely failed me. I spoke to him as if he had been an accountable being. 'Once for all,' I said, 'tell me what I have a right to know. You suspect me of something. What is it?'

Instead of directly replying, he seized my arm, and led me to the table. 'Take up that paper,' he said. 'There is writing on it. Read—and let Her judge between us. Your life depends on how you answer me.'

Was there a weapon concealed in the room ? or had he got it in the pocket of his dressing-gown ? I listened for the sound of the doctor's returning footsteps in the passage outside, and heard nothing. My life had once depended, years since, on my success in heading the arrest of an escaped prisoner. I was not conscious, then, of feeling my energies weakened by fear. But *that* man was not mad ; and I was younger, in those days, by a good twenty years or more. At my later time of life, I could show my old friend that I was not afraid of him—but I was conscious of an effort in doing it.

I opened the paper. ‘Am I to read this to myself?’ I asked. ‘Or am I to read it aloud?’

‘Read it aloud!’

In these terms, his daughter addressed him :

‘I have been so unfortunate, dearest father, as to displease you, and I dare not hope that

you will consent to receive me. What it is my painful duty to tell you, must be told in writing.

‘Grieved as I am to distress you, in your present state of health, I must not hesitate to reveal what it has been my misfortune—I may even say my misery, when I think of my mother—to discover.

‘But let me make sure, in such a serious matter as this is, that I am not mistaken.

‘In those happy past days, when I was still dear to my father, you said you thought of writing to invite a dearly-valued friend to pay a visit to this house. You had first known him, as I understood, when my mother was still living. Many interesting things you told me about this old friend, but you never mentioned that he knew, or that he had even seen, my mother. I was left to suppose that those two had remained strangers to each other to the day of her death.

‘If there is any misinterpretation here of what you said, or perhaps of what you meant to say, pray destroy what I have written without turning to the next page ; and forgive me for having innocently startled you by a false alarm.’

Mr. Gracedieu interrupted me.

‘Put it down!’ he cried ; ‘I won’t wait till you have got to the end—I shall question you now. Give me the paper ; it will help me to keep this mystery of iniquity clear in my own mind.’

I gave him the paper.

He hesitated—and looked at the portrait once more. ‘Turn her away from me,’ he said ; ‘I can’t face my wife.’

I placed the picture with its back to him.

He consulted the paper, reading it with but little of the confusion and hesitation which my experience of him had induced me to an-

ticipate. Had the mad excitement that possessed him exercised an influence in clearing his mind, resembling in some degree the influence exercised by a storm in clearing the air? Whatever the right explanation may be, I can only report what I saw. I could hardly have mastered what his daughter had written more readily, if I had been reading it myself.

‘Helena tells me,’ he began, ‘that you said you knew her by her likeness to her mother. Is that true?’

‘Quite true.’

‘And you made an excuse for leaving her—see! here it is, written down. You made an excuse, and left her when she asked for an explanation.’

‘I did.’

He consulted the paper again.

‘My daughter says—No! I won’t be hurried and I won’t be interrupted—she says you were confused. Is that so?’

‘It is so. Let your questions wait for a moment. I wish to tell you why I was confused.’

‘Haven’t I said I won’t be interrupted? Do you think you can shake *my* resolution?’ He referred to the paper again. ‘I have lost the place. It’s your fault—find it for me.’

The evidence which was intended to convict me was the evidence which I was expected to find! I pointed it out to him.

His natural courtesy asserted itself in spite of his anger. He said ‘Thank you,’ and questioned me the moment after as fiercely as ever. ‘Go back to the time, sir, when we met in your rooms at the prison. Did you know my wife then?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Did you and she see each other—ha! I’ve got it now—did you see each other after I had left the town? No prevarication! You own to telling Helena that you knew her by her

likeness to her mother. You must have seen her mother. Where ?

I made another effort to defend myself. He again refused furiously to hear me. It was useless to persist. Whatever the danger that threatened me might be, the sooner it showed itself the easier I should feel. I told him that Mrs. Gracedieu had called on me, after he and his wife had left the town.

‘Do you mean to tell me,’ he cried, ‘that She came to You?’

‘I do.’

After that answer, he no longer required the paper to help him. He threw it from him on the floor.

‘And you received her,’ he said, ‘without inquiring whether I knew of her visit or not? Guilty deception on your part—guilty deception on her part. Oh, the hideous wickedness of it!’

When his mad suspicion that I had been

his wife's lover betrayed itself in this way, I made a last attempt, in the face of my own conviction that it was hopeless, to place my conduct and his wife's conduct before him in the true light.

‘Mrs. Gracedieu’s object was to consult me——’ Before I could say the next words, I saw him put his hand into the pocket of his dressing-gown.

‘An innocent man;’ he sternly declared, ‘would have told me that my wife had been to see him—you kept it a secret. An innocent woman would have given me a reason for wishing to go to you—she kept it a secret, when she left my house; she kept it a secret when she came back.’

‘Mr. Gracedieu, I insist on being heard! Your wife’s motive——’

He drew from his pocket the thing that he had hidden from me. This time, there was no concealment; he let me see that he was

opening a razor. It was no time for asserting my innocence ; I had to think of preserving my life. When a man is without firearms, what defence can avail against a razor in the hands of a madman ? A chair was at my side ; it offered the one poor means of guarding myself that I could see. I laid my hand on it, and kept my eye on him.

He paused, looking backwards and forwards between the picture and me.

‘ Which of them shall I kill first ? ’ he said to himself. ‘ The man who was my trusted friend ? Or the woman whom I believed to be an angel on earth ? ’ He stopped once more, in a state of fierce self-concentration, debating what he should do. ‘ The woman,’ he decided. ‘ Wretch ! Fiend ! Harlot ! How I loved her ! ! ! ’

With a yell of fury, he pounced on the picture—ripped the canvas out of the frame—and cut it malignantly into fragments. As

they dropped from the razor on the floor, he stamped on them, and ground them under his foot. 'Go, wife of my bosom,' he cried, with a dreadful mockery of voice and look—'go, and burn everlastingly in the place of torment !' His eyes glared at me. 'Your turn now,' he said—and rushed at me with his weapon ready in his hand. I hurled the chair at his right arm. The razor dropped on the floor. I caught him by the wrist. Like a wild animal he tried to bite me. With my free hand—if I had known how to defend myself in any other way, I would have taken that way—with my free hand I seized him by the throat ; forced him back ; and held him against the wall. My grasp on his throat kept him quiet. But the dread of seriously injuring him so completely overcame me, that I forgot I was a prisoner in the room, and was on the point of alarming the household by a cry for help.

I was still struggling to preserve my self-control, when the sound of footsteps broke the silence outside. I heard the key turn in the lock, and saw the doctor at the open door.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CUMBERSOME LADIES.

I CANNOT prevail upon myself to dwell at any length on the events that followed.

We secured my unhappy friend, and carried him to his bed. It was necessary to have men in attendance who could perform the duty of watching him. The doctor sent for them, while I went downstairs to make the best I could of the miserable news which it was impossible entirely to conceal.

All that I could do to spare Miss Jillgall, I did. I was obliged to acknowledge that there had been an outbreak of violence, and that the portrait of the Minister's wife had been de-

stroyed by the Minister himself. Of Helena's revenge on me I said nothing. It had led to consequences which even her merciless malice could not have contemplated. There were no obstacles in the way of keeping secret the attempt on my life. But I was compelled to own that Mr. Gracedieu had taken a dislike to me, which rendered it necessary that my visit should be brought to an end. I hastened to add that I should go to the hotel, and should wait there until the next day, in the hope of hearing better news.

Of the multitude of questions with which poor Miss Jillgall overwhelmed me—of the wild words of sorrow and alarm that escaped her—of the desperate manner in which she held by my arm, and implored me not to go away, when I must see for myself that 'she was a person entirely destitute of presence of mind'—I shall say nothing. The undeserved suffering that is inflicted on innocent persons

by the sins of others demands silent sympathy; and, to that extent at least, I can say that I honestly felt for my quaint and pleasant little friend.

In the evening the doctor called on me at the hotel. The medical treatment of his patient had succeeded in calming the maddened brain under the influence of sleep. If the night passed quietly, better news might be hoped for in the morning.

On the next day I had arranged to drive to the farm, being resolved not to disappoint Eunice. But I shrank from the prospect of having to distress her as I had already distressed Miss Jillgall. The only alternative left was to repeat the sad story in writing, subject to the concealments which I had already observed. This I did, and sent the letter by messenger, overnight, so that Eunice might know when to expect me.

The medical report, in the morning, justified

some hope. Mr. Gracedieu had slept well, and there had been no reappearance of insane violence on his waking. But the doctor's opinion was far from encouraging when we spoke of the future. He did not anticipate the cruel necessity of placing the Minister under restraint—unless some new provocation led to a new outbreak. The misfortune to be feared was imbecility.

I was just leaving the hotel, to keep my appointment with Eunice, when the waiter announced the arrival of a young lady who wished to speak with me. Before I could ask if she had mentioned her name, the young lady herself walked in—Helena Gracedieu.

She explained her object in calling on me, with the exasperating composure which was peculiarly her own. No parallel to it occurs to me in my official experience of shameless women.

‘I don't wish to speak of what happened

yesterday, so far as I know anything about it,' she began. 'It is quite enough for me that you have been obliged to leave the house and to take refuge in this hotel. I have come to say a word about the future. Are you honouring me with your attention ?'

I signed to her to go on. If I had answered in words, I should have told her to leave the room.

'At first,' she resumed, 'I thought of writing ; but it occurred to me that you might keep my letter, and show it to Philip, by way of lowering me in his good opinion, as you have lowered me in the good opinion of his father. My object in coming here is to give you a word of warning. If you attempt to make mischief next between Philip and myself, I shall hear of it—and you know what to expect, when you have Me for an enemy. It is not worth while to say any more. We understand each other, I hope ?'

She was determined to have a reply—and she got it.

‘Not quite yet,’ I said. ‘I have been hitherto, as becomes a gentleman, always mindful of a woman’s claims to forbearance. You will do well not to tempt me into forgetting that *you* are a woman, by prolonging your visit. Now, Miss Helena Gracedieu, we understand each other.’

She made me a low curtsy, and answered in her finest tone of irony : ‘I only desire to wish you a pleasant journey home.’

I rang for the waiter. ‘Show this lady out,’ I said.

Even this failed to have the slightest effect on her. She sauntered to the door, as perfectly at her ease as if the room had been hers—not mine.

I had thought of driving to the farm. Shall I confess it? My temper was so completely upset that active movement of some kind

offered the one means of relief in which I could find refuge. The farm was not more than five miles distant, and I had been a good walker all my life. After making the needful inquiries, I set forth to visit Eunice on foot.

My way through the town led me past the Minister's house. I had left the door some fifty yards behind me, when I saw two ladies approaching. They were walking, in the friendliest manner, arm in arm. As they came nearer, I discovered Miss Jillgall. Her companion was the middle-aged lady who had declined to give her name, when we met accidentally at Mr. Gracedieu's door.

Hysterically impulsive, Miss Jillgall seized both my hands, and overwhelmed me with entreaties that I would go back with her to the house. I listened rather absently. The middle-aged lady happened to be nearer to me now than on either of the former occasions on

which I had seen her. There was something in the expression of her eyes which seemed to be familiar to me. But the effort of my memory was not helped by what I observed in the other parts of her face. The iron-gray hair, the baggy lower eyelids, the fat cheeks, the coarse complexion, and the double chin, were features, and very disagreeable features too, which I had never seen at any former time.

‘Do pray come back with us,’ Miss Jillgall pleaded. ‘We were just talking of you. I and my friend——’ There she stopped, evidently on the point of blurting out the name which she had been forbidden to utter in my hearing.

The lady smiled ; her provokingly familiar eyes rested on me with a humorous enjoyment of the scene.

‘My dear,’ she said to Miss Jillgall, ‘caution ceases to be a virtue when it ceases to be of

any use. The Governor is beginning to remember me, and the inevitable recognition—with *his* quickness of perception—is likely to be a matter of minutes now.’ She turned to me. ‘In more ways than one, sir, women are hardly used by Nature. As they advance in years they lose more in personal appearance than the men do. You are white-haired, and (pray excuse me) you are too fat; and (allow me to take another liberty) you stoop at the shoulders—but you have not entirely lost your good looks. *I* am no longer recognisable. Allow me to prompt you, as they say on the stage. I am Mrs. Tenbruggen.’

As a man of the world, I ought to have been capable of concealing my astonishment and dismay. She struck me dumb.

Mrs. Tenbruggen in the town! The one woman whose appearance Mr. Gracedieu had dreaded, and justly dreaded, stood before me—free, as a friend of his kinswoman, to enter

his house, at the very time when he was a helpless man, guarded by watchers at his bedside. My first clear idea was to get away from both the women, and consider what was to be done next. I bowed—and begged to be excused—and said I was in a hurry, all in a breath.

Hearing this, the best of genial old maids was unable to restrain her curiosity. ‘Where are you going?’ she asked.

Too confused to think of an excuse, I said I was going to the farm.

‘To see my dear Euneece?’ Miss Jillgall burst out. ‘Oh, we will go with you!’ Mrs. Tenbruggen’s politeness added immediately, ‘With the greatest pleasure.’

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE JOURNEY TO THE FARM.

My first ungrateful impulse was to get rid of the two cumbersome ladies who had offered to be my companions. It was needless to call upon my invention for an excuse ; the truth, as I gladly perceived, would serve my purpose. I had only to tell them that I had arranged to walk to the farm.

Lean, wiry, and impetuous, Miss Jillgall received my excuse with the sincerest approval of it, as a new idea. ‘Nothing could be more agreeable to me,’ she declared ; ‘I have been a wonderful walker all my life.’ She turned to her friend. ‘We will go with him, my dear, won’t we ?’

Mrs. Tenbruggen's reception of this proposal inspired me with hope ; she asked how far it was to the farm. 'Five miles!' she repeated. 'And five miles back again, unless the farmer lends us a cart. My dear Selina, you might as well ask me to walk to the North Pole. You have got rid of one of us, Mr. Governor,' she added pleasantly ; 'and the other, if you only walk fast enough, you will leave behind you on the road. If I believed in luck—which I don't—I should call you a fortunate man.'

But companionable Selina would not hear of a separation. She asked, in her most irresistible manner, if I objected to driving instead of walking. Her heart's dearest wish, she said, was to make her bosom friend and myself better acquainted with each other. To conclude, she reminded me that there was a cab-stand in the next street.

Perhaps I might have been influenced by

my distrust of Mrs. Tenbruggen, or perhaps by my anxiety to protect Eunice. It struck me that I might warn the defenceless girl to be on her guard with Mrs. Tenbruggen to better purpose, if Eunice was in a position to recognise her in any future emergency that might occur. To my mind, this dangerous woman was doubly formidable—and for a good reason : she was the bosom friend of that innocent and unwary person, Miss Jillgall.

So I amiably consented to forego my walk, yielding to the superior attraction of Mrs. Tenbruggen's company. On that day the sunshine was tempered by a delightful breeze. If we had been in the biggest and worst-governed city on the civilized earth, we should have found no public vehicle, open to the air, which could offer accommodation to three people. Being only in a country town, we had a light four-wheeled chaise at our disposal, as a matter of course.

No wise man expects to be mercifully treated, when he is shut into a carriage with a mature single lady, inflamed by curiosity. I was not unprepared for Miss Jillgall when she alluded, for the second time, to the sad events which had happened in the house on the previous day—and especially to the destruction by Mr. Gracedieu of the portrait of his wife.

‘Why didn’t he destroy something else?’ she pleaded piteously. ‘It is such a disappointment to Me. I never liked that picture myself. Of course I ought to have admired the portrait of the wife of my benefactor. But no—that disagreeable painted face was too much for me. I should have felt inexpressibly relieved, if I could have shown it to Elizabeth, and heard her say that she agreed with me.’

‘Perhaps I saw it when I called on you.’ Mrs. Tenbruggen suggested. ‘Where did the picture hang?’

‘My dear ! I received you in the dining-room, and the portrait hung in Mr. Gracedieu’s study.’

What they said to each other next, escaped my attention. Quite unconsciously, Miss Jillgall had revealed to me a danger which neither the Minister nor I had discovered, though it had conspicuously threatened us both on the wall of the study. The act of mad destruction which, if I had possessed the means of safely interfering, I should certainly have endeavoured to prevent, now assumed a new and startling aspect. If Mrs. Tenbruggen really had some motive of her own for endeavouring to identify the adopted child, the preservation of the picture must have led her straight to the end in view. The most casual opportunity of comparing Helena with the portrait of Mrs. Gracedieu would have revealed the likeness between mother and daughter—and, that result at-

tained, the identification of Eunice with the infant whom the 'Miss Chance' of those days had brought to the prison must inevitably have followed. It was perhaps natural that Mr. Gracedieu's infatuated devotion to the memory of his wife, should have blinded him to the betrayal of Helena's parentage, which met his eyes every time he entered his study. But that I should have been too stupid to discover what he had failed to see, was a wound dealt to my self-esteem which I was vain enough to feel acutely.

Mrs. Tenbruggen's voice, cheery and humorous, broke in on my reflections, with an odd question :

'Mr. Governor, do you ever condescend to read novels?'

'It's not easy to say, Mrs. Tenbruggen, how grateful I am to the writers of novels.'

'Ah! I read novels, too. But I blush to confess—do I blush?—that I never thought

of feeling grateful till you mentioned it. Selina and I don't complain of your preferring your own reflections to our company. On the contrary, you have reminded us agreeably of the heroes of fiction, when the author describes them as being "absorbed in thought." For some minutes, Mr. Governor, you have been a hero ; absorbed, as I venture to guess, in unpleasant remembrances of the time when I was a single lady. You have not forgotten how badly I behaved, and what shocking things I said, in those bygone days. Am I right ?

‘ You are entirely wrong.’

It is possible that I may have spoken a little too sharply. Anyway, faithful Selina interceded for her friend. ‘ Oh, dear Sir, don't be hard on Elizabeth ! She always means well.’ Mrs. Tenbruggen, as facetious as ever, made a grateful return for a small compliment. She chucked Miss Jillgall under the chin, with

the air of an amorous old gentleman expressing his approval of a pretty servant-girl. It was impossible to look at the two, in their relative situations, without laughing. But Mrs. Tenbruggen failed to cheat me into altering my opinion of her. Innocent Miss Jillgall clapped her ugly hands, and said: 'Isn't she good company?'

Mrs. Tenbruggen's social resources were not exhausted yet. She suddenly shifted to the serious side of her character.

'Perhaps I have improved a little,' she said, 'as I have advanced in years. The sorrows of an unhappy married life may have had a purifying influence on my nature. My husband and I began badly. Mr. Tenbruggen thought I had money; and I thought Mr. Tenbruggen had money. He was taken in by me; and I was taken in by him. When he repeated the words of the marriage service (most impressively read by your friend the

Chaplain): 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow'—his eloquent voice suggested one of the largest incomes in Europe. When I promised and vowed, in my turn, the delightful prospect of squandering my rich husband's money made quite a new woman of me. I declare solemnly, when I said I would love, honour, and obey Mr. T., I looked as if I really meant it. Wherever he is now, poor dear, he is cheating somebody. Such a handsome gentlemanlike man, Selina! And, oh, Mr. Governor, such a blackguard!'

Having described her husband in those terms, she got tired of the subject. We were now favoured with another view of this many-sided woman. She appeared in her professional character.

'Ah, what a delicious breeze is blowing, out here in the country!' she said. 'Will you excuse me if I take off my gloves? I want to air my hands.' She held up her hands to

the breeze ; firm, muscular, deadly white hands. ‘In my professional occupation,’ she explained, ‘I am always rubbing, tickling, squeezing, tapping, kneading, rolling, striking the muscles of patients. Selina, do you know the movements of your own joints? Flexion, extension, abduction, adduction, rotation, circumduction, pronation, supination, and the lateral movements. Be proud of those accomplishments, my dear, but beware of attempting to become a Masseuse. There are drawbacks to that vocation—and I am conscious of one of them at this moment.’ She lifted her hands to her nose. ‘Pah! my hands smell of other people’s flesh. The delicious country air will blow it away—the luxury of purification!’ Her fingers twisted and quivered, and got crooked at one moment and straight again at another, and showed themselves in succession singly, and flew into each other fiercely interlaced, and then spread out again like the sticks

of a fan, until it really made me giddy to look at them. As for Miss Jillgall, she lifted her poor little sunken eyes rapturously to the sky, as if she called the honest sunlight to witness that this was the most lovable woman on the face of the earth.

But elderly female fascination offers its allurements in vain to the rough animal, man. Suspicion of Mrs. Tenbruggen's motives had established itself firmly in my mind. Why had the popular Masseuse abandoned her brilliant career in London, and plunged into the obscurity of a country town? An opportunity of clearing up the doubt thus suggested seemed to have presented itself now. 'Is it indiscreet to ask,' I said, 'if you are here in your professional capacity?'

Her cunning seized its advantage and put a sly question to me. 'Do you wish to be one of my patients yourself?'

'That is unfortunately impossible,' I replied; 'I have arranged to return to London.'

‘Immediately?’

‘To-morrow at the latest.’

Artful as she was, Mrs. Tenbruggen failed to conceal a momentary expression of relief which betrayed itself, partly in her manner, partly in her face. She had ascertained, to her own complete satisfaction, that my speedy departure was an event which might be relied on.

‘But I have not yet answered you,’ she resumed. ‘To tell the truth, I am eager to try my hands on you. Massage, as I practise it, would lighten your weight, and restore your figure; I may even say would lengthen your life. You will think of me, one of these days, won’t you? In the meanwhile—yes! I am here in my professional capacity. Several interesting cases; and one very remarkable person, brought to death’s door by the doctors; a rich man who is liberal in paying his fees. There is my quarrel with London, and

Londoners. Some of their papers, medical newspapers of course, declare that my fees are exorbitant ; and there is a tendency among the patients—I mean the patients who are rolling in riches—to follow the lead of the newspapers. I am no worm to be trodden on, in that way. The London people shall wait for me, until they miss me—and, when I do go back, they will find the fees increased. *My fingers and thumbs, Mr. Governor, are not to be insulted with impunity.*'

Miss Jillgall nodded her head at me. It was an eloquent nod. 'Admire my spirited friend,' was the interpretation I put on it.

At the same time, my private sentiments suggested that Mrs. Tenbruggen's reply was too perfectly satisfactory, viewed as an explanation. My suspicions were by no means set at rest ; and I was resolved not to let the subject drop yet. 'Speaking of Mr. Gracedieu, and of the chances of his partial recovery,' I said,

‘do you think the Minister would benefit by Massage?’

‘I haven’t a doubt of it, if you can get rid of the doctor.’

‘You think he would be an obstacle in the way?’

‘There are some medical men who are honourable exceptions to the general rule; and he may be one of them,’ Mrs. Tenbruggen admitted. ‘Don’t be too hopeful. As a doctor, he belongs to the most tyrannical trades-union in existence. May I make a personal remark?’

‘Certainly.’

‘I find something in your manner—pray don’t suppose that I am angry—which looks like distrust; I mean, distrust of Me.’

Miss Jillgall’s ever ready kindness interfered in my defence: ‘Oh, no, Elizabeth! You are not often mistaken; but indeed you are wrong now. Look at my distinguished friend.

I remember my copy-book, when I was a small creature learning to write, in England. There were first lines that we copied, in big letters, and one of them said, "Distrust Is Mean." I know a young person, whose name begins with H, who is one mass of meanness. But '—excellent Selina paused, and pointed to me with a gesture of triumph—'no meanness there!'

Mrs. Tenbruggen waited to hear what I had to say, scornfully insensible to Miss Jillgall's well-meant interruption.

'You are not altogether mistaken,' I told her. 'I can't say that my mind is in a state of distrust, but I own that you puzzle me.'

'How, if you please?'

'May I presume that you remember the occasion when we met at Mr. Gracedieu's house-door? You saw that I failed to recognise you, and you refused to give your name when the servant asked for it. A few days

afterwards, I heard you (quite accidentally) forbid Miss Jillgall to mention your name in my hearing. I am at a loss to understand it.'

Before she could answer me, the chaise drew up at the gate of the farm-house. Mrs. Tenbruggen carefully promised to explain what had puzzled me, at the first opportunity. 'If it escapes my memory,' she said, 'pray remind me of it.'

I determined to remind her of it. Whether I could depend on her to tell me the truth, might be quite another thing.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE DECISION OF EUNICE.

EUNICE ran out to meet us, and opened the gate. She was instantly folded in Miss Jillgall's arms. On her release, she came to me, eager for news of her father's health. When I had communicated all that I thought it right to tell her of the doctor's last report, she noticed Mrs. Tenbruggen. The appearance of a stranger seemed to embarrass her. I left Miss Jillgall to introduce them to each other.

‘Darling Euneece, you remember Mrs. Tenbruggen's name, I am sure? Elizabeth, this is my sweet girl; I mentioned her in my letters to you.’

‘ I hope she will be *my* sweet girl, when we know each other a little better. May I kiss you, dear? You have lovely eyes ; but I am sorry to see that they don’t look like happy eyes. You want Mamma Tenbruggen to cheer you. What a charming old house !’

She put her arm round Eunice’s waist, and led her to the house-door. Her enjoyment of the creepers that twined their way up the pillars of the porch was simply perfection, as a piece of acting. When the farmer’s wife presented herself, Mrs. Tenbruggen was so irresistibly amiable, and took such flattering notice of the children, that the harmless British matron actually blushed with pleasure. ‘ I’m sure, ma’am, you must have children of your own,’ she said. Mrs. Tenbruggen cast her eyes on the floor, and sighed with pathetic resignation. A sweet little family, and all cruelly swept away by death. If the performance meant anything, it did most assuredly mean that.

‘What wonderful self-possession!’ somebody whispered in my ear. The children in the room were healthy, well-behaved little creatures—but the name of the innocent one among them was Selina.

Before dinner we were shown over the farm.

The good woman of the house led the way, and Miss Jillgall and I accompanied her. The children ran on in front of us. Still keeping possession of Eunice, Mrs. Tenbruggen followed at some distance behind. I looked back, after no very long interval, and saw that a separation had taken place. Mrs. Tenbruggen passed me, not looking so pleasantly as usual, joined the children, and walked with two of them, hand in hand, a pattern of maternal amiability. I dropped back a little, and gave Eunice an opportunity of joining me; having purposely left her to form her own opinion, without any adverse influence exercised on my part.

‘Is that lady a friend of yours?’ she asked.

‘No ; only an acquaintance. What do you think of her ?’

‘I thought I should like her, at first ; she was so kind, and seemed to take such an interest in me. But she said such strange things—asked if I was reckoned like my mother, and which of us was the eldest, my sister or myself, and whether we were my father’s only two children, and if one of us was more his favourite than the other. What I could tell her, I did tell. But when I said I didn’t know which of us was the oldest, she gave me an impudent tap on the cheek, and said, “I don’t believe you, child,” and left me. How can Selina be so fond of her ? Don’t mention it to anyone else ; I hope I shall never see her again.’

‘I will keep your secret, Eunice ; and you must keep mine. I entirely agree with you.’

‘You agree with me in disliking her ?’

‘Heartily.’

We could say no more at that time. Our friends in advance were waiting for us. We joined them at once.

If I had felt any doubt of the purpose which had really induced Mrs. Tenbruggen to leave London, all further uncertainty on my part was at an end. She had some vile interest of her own to serve by identifying Mr. Gracedieu’s adopted child—but what the nature of that interest might be, it was impossible to guess. The future, when I thought of it now, filled me with dismay. A more utterly helpless position than mine it was not easy to conceive. To warn the Minister, in his present critical state of health, was simply impossible. My relations with Helena forbade me even to approach her. And, as for Selina, she was little less than a mere tool in the hands of her well-beloved friend. What, in God’s name, was I to do?

At dinner-time, we found the master of the house waiting to bid us welcome.

Personally speaking, he presented a remarkable contrast to the typical British farmer. He was neither big nor burly ; he spoke English as well as I did ; and there was nothing in his dress which would have made him a fit subject for a picture of rustic life. When he spoke, he was able to talk on subjects unconnected with agricultural pursuits ; nor did I hear him grumble about the weather and the crops. It was pleasant to see that his wife was proud of him, and that he was, what all fathers ought to be, his children's best and dearest friend. Why do I dwell on these details, relating to a man whom I was not destined to see again ? Only because I had reason to feel grateful to him. When my spirits were depressed by anxiety, he made my mind easy about Eunice, as long as she remained in his house.

The social arrangements, when our meal was over, fell of themselves into the right train.

Miss Jillgall went upstairs, with the mother and the children, to see the nursery and the bedrooms. Mrs. Tenbruggen discovered a bond of union between the farmer and herself; they were both skilled players at backgammon, and they sat down to try conclusions at their favourite game. Without any wearisome necessity for excuses or stratagems, Eunice took my arm and led me to the welcome retirement of her own sitting-room.

I could honestly congratulate her, when I heard that she was established at the farm as a member of the family. While she was governess to the children, she was safe from dangers that might have threatened her, if she had been compelled by circumstances to return to the Minister's house.

The entry in her Journal, which she was

anxious that I should read, was placed before me next.

I followed the poor child's account of the fearful night that she had passed, with an interest that held me breathless to the end. A terrible dream, which had impressed a sense of its reality on the sleeper by reaching its climax in somnambulism—this was the obvious explanation, no doubt; and a rational mind would not hesitate to accept it. But a rational mind is not a universal gift, even in a country which prides itself on the idol-worship of Fact. Those good friends who are always better acquainted with our faults, failings, and weaknesses than we can pretend to be ourselves, had long since discovered that my nature was superstitious, and my imagination likely to mislead me in the presence of events which encouraged it. Well! I was weak enough to recoil from the purely rational view of all that Eunice had suffered, and

heard, and seen, on the fateful night recorded in her journal. Good and Evil walk the ways of this unintelligible world, on the same free conditions. If we cling, as many of us do, to the comforting belief that departed spirits can minister to earthly creatures for good—can be felt moving in us, in a train of thought, and seen as visible manifestations, in a dream—with what pretence of reason can we deny that the same freedom of supernatural influence which is conceded to the departed spirit, working for good, is also permitted to the departed spirit, working for evil? If the grave cannot wholly part mother and child, when the mother's life has been good, does eternal annihilation separate them, when the mother's life has been wicked? No! If the departed spirit can bring with it a blessing, the departed spirit can bring with it a curse. I dared not confess to Eunice that the influence of her murderess-mother might, as I thought

possible, have been supernaturally present when she heard temptation whispering in her ear; but I dared not deny it to myself. All that I could say to satisfy and sustain her, I did say. And when I declared—with my whole heart declared—that the noble passion which had elevated her whole being, and had triumphed over the sorest trials that desertion could inflict, would still triumph to the end, I saw hope, in that brave and true heart, showing its bright promise for the future in Eunice's eyes.

She closed and locked her journal. By common consent we sought the relief of changing the subject. Eunice asked me if it was really necessary that I should return to London.

I shrank from telling her that I could be of no further use to her father, while he regarded me with an enmity which I had not deserved. But I saw no reason for concealing that it was my purpose to see Philip Dunboyne.

‘You told me yesterday,’ I reminded her, ‘that I was to say you had forgiven him. Do you still wish me to do that?’

‘Indeed I do!’

‘Have you thought of it seriously? Are you sure of not having been hurried by a generous impulse into saying more than you mean?’

‘I have been thinking of it,’ she said, ‘through the wakeful hours of last night—and many things are plain to me, which I was not sure of in the time when I was so happy. He has caused me the bitterest sorrow of my life, but he can’t undo the good that I owe to him. He has made a better girl of me, in the time when his love was mine. I don’t forget that. Miserably as it has ended, I don’t forget that.’

Her voice trembled; the tears rose in her eyes. It was impossible for me to conceal the distress that I felt. The noble creature saw it. ‘No,’ she said faintly; ‘I am not going to cry.

Don't look so sorry for me.' Her hand pressed my hand gently—*she* pitied *me*. When I saw how she struggled to control herself, and did control herself, I declare to God I could have gone down on my knees before her.

She asked to be allowed to speak of Philip again, and for the last time.

'When you meet with him in London, he may perhaps ask if you have seen Eunice.'

'My child ! he is sure to ask.'

'Break it to him gently—but don't let him deceive himself. In this world, he must never hope to see me again.'

I tried—very gently—to remonstrate. 'At your age, and at his age,' I said, 'surely there is hope ?'

'There is no hope.' She pressed her hand on her heart. 'I know it, I feel it, here.'

'Oh, Eunice, it's hard for me to say that !'

'I will try to make it easier for you. Say that I have forgiven him—and say no more.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE GOVERNOR ON HIS GUARD.

AFTER leaving Eunice, my one desire was to be alone. I had much to think of, and I wanted an opportunity of recovering myself. On my way out of the house, in search of the first solitary place that I could discover, I passed the room in which we had dined. The door was ajar. Before I could get by it, Mrs. Tenbruggen stepped out and stopped me.

‘ Will you come in here for a moment?’ she said. ‘ The farmer has been called away, and I want to speak to you.’

Very unwillingly—but how could I have

refused without giving offence?—I entered the room.

‘When you noticed my keeping my name from you,’ Mrs. Tenbruggen began, ‘while Selina was with us, you placed me in an awkward position. Our little friend is an excellent creature, but her tongue runs away with her sometimes; I am obliged to be careful of taking her too readily into my confidence. For instance, I have never told her what my name was before I married. Won’t you sit down?’

I had purposely remained standing as a hint to her not to prolong the interview. The hint was thrown away; I took a chair.

‘Selina’s letters had informed me,’ she resumed, ‘that Mr. Gracedieu was a nervous invalid. When I came to England, I had hoped to try what Massage might do to relieve him. The cure of their popular preacher might have advertised me through the whole of the Congregational sect. It was

essential to my success that I should present myself as a stranger. I could trust time and change, and my married name (certainly not known to Mr. Gracedieu) to keep up my incognito. He would have refused to see me if he had known that I was once Miss Chance.'

I began to be interested.

Here was an opportunity, perhaps, of discovering what the Minister had failed to remember when he had been speaking of this woman, and when I had asked if he had ever offended her. I was especially careful in making my inquiries.

'I remember how you spoke to Mr. Gracedieu,' I said, 'when you and he met, long ago, in my rooms. But surely you don't think him capable of vindictively remembering some thoughtless words, which escaped you sixteen or seventeen years since?'

'I am not quite such a fool as that, Mr. Governor. What I was thinking of was an un-

pleasant correspondence between the Minister and myself. Before I was so unfortunate as to meet with Mr. Tenbruggen, I obtained a chance of employment in a public Institution, on condition that I included a clergyman among my references. Knowing nobody else whom I could apply to, I rashly wrote to Mr. Gracedieu, and received one of those cold and cruel refusals which only the strictest religious principle can produce. I was mortally offended at the time ; and if your friend the Minister had been within my reach——’ She paused, and finished the sentence by a significant gesture.

‘ Well,’ I said, ‘ he is within your reach now.’

‘ And out of his mind,’ she added. ‘ Besides, one’s sense of injury doesn’t last (except in novels and plays) through a series of years. I don’t pity him—and if an opportunity of shaking his high position among his admiring congregation presented itself, I dare say I

might make a mischievous return for his letter to me. In the meanwhile, we may drop the subject. I suppose you understand, now, why I concealed my name from you, and why I kept out of the house while you were in it.'

It was plain enough, of course. If I had known her again, or had heard her name, I might have told the Minister that Mrs. Tenbruggen and Miss Chance were one and the same. And if I had seen her and talked with her in the house, my memory might have shown itself capable of improvement. Having politely presented the expression of my thanks, I rose to go.

She stopped me at the door.

'One word more,' she said, 'while Selina is out of the way. I need hardly tell you that I have not trusted her with the Minister's secret. You and I are, as I take it, the only people now living who know the truth about those two girls. And we keep our advantage.'

‘What advantage?’ I asked.

‘Don’t you know?’

‘I don’t indeed.’

‘No more do I. Female folly, and a slip of the tongue; I am old and ugly, but I am still a woman. About Miss Eunice. Somebody has told the pretty little fool never to trust strangers. You would have been amused, if you had heard that sly young person prevaricating with me. In one respect, her appearance strikes me. She is not like either the wretch who was hanged, or the poor victim who was murdered. Can she be the adopted child? Or is it the other sister, whom I have not seen yet? Oh, come! come! Don’t try to look as if you didn’t know. That is really too ridiculous.’

‘You alluded just now,’ I answered, ‘to our “advantage” in being the only persons who know the truth about the two girls. Well, Mrs. Tenbruggen, I keep *my* advantage.’

‘In other words,’ she rejoined, ‘you leave me to make the discovery for myself. Well, my friend, I mean to do it!’

* * * * *

In the evening, my hotel offered to me the refuge of which I stood in need. I could think, for the first time that day, without interruption.

Being resolved to see Philip, I prepared myself for the interview by consulting my extracts once more. The letter, in which Mrs. Tenbruggen figures, inspired me with the hope of protection for Mr. Gracedieu, attainable through no less a person than Helena herself.

To begin with, she would certainly share Philip’s aversion to the Masseuse, and her dislike of Miss Jillgall would, just as possibly, extend to Miss Jillgall’s friend. The hostile feeling thus set up might be trusted to keep watch on Mrs. Tenbruggen’s proceedings, with a vigilance not attainable by the coarser

observation of a man. In the event of an improvement in the Minister's health, I should hear of it both from the doctor and from Miss Jillgall, and in that case I should instantly return to my unhappy friend and put him on his guard.

I started for London by the early train in the morning.

My way home from the terminus took me past the hotel at which the elder Mr. Dunboyne was staying. I called on him. He was reported to be engaged; that is to say, immersed in his books. The address on one of Philip's letters had informed me that he was staying at another hotel. Pursuing my inquiries in this direction, I met with a severe disappointment. Mr. Philip Dunboyne had left the hotel that morning; for what destination neither the landlord nor the waiter could tell me.

The next day's post brought with it the in-

formation which I had failed to obtain. Miss Jillgall wrote, informing me in her strongest language that Philip Dunboyne had returned to Helena. Indignant Selina added : ‘ Helena means to make him marry her ; and I promise you she shall fail, if I can stop it.’

In taking leave of Eunice, I had given her my address ; had warned her to be careful, if she and Mrs. Tenbruggen happened to meet again ; and had begged her to write to me, or to come to me, if anything happened to alarm her in my absence.

In two days more, I received a line from Eunice, written evidently in the greatest agitation.

‘ Philip has discovered me. He has been here, and has insisted on seeing me. I have refused. The good farmer has so kindly taken my part. I can write no more.’

CHAPTER L.

THE NEWS FROM THE FARM.

WHEN I next heard from Miss Jillgall, the introductory part of her letter merely reminded me that Philip Dunboyne was established in the town, and that Helena was in daily communication with him. I shall do Selina no injustice if my extract begins with her second page.

‘You will sympathize, I am sure’ (she writes), ‘with the indignation which urged me to call on Philip, and tell him the way to the farmhouse. Think of Helena being determined to marry him, whether he wants to or not! I am afraid this is bad grammar. But

there are occasions when even a cultivated lady fails in her grammar, and almost envies the men their privilege of swearing when they are in a rage. My state of mind is truly indescribable. Grief mingles with anger, when I tell you that my sweet Euneece has disappointed me, for the first time since I had the happiness of knowing and admiring her. What can have been the motive of her refusal to receive her penitent lover? Is it pride? We are told that Satan fell through pride. Euneece satanic? Impossible! I feel inclined to go and ask her what has hardened her heart against a poor young man, who bitterly regrets his own folly. Do you think it was bad advice from the farmer or his wife? In that case, I shall exert my influence, and take her away. You would do the same, wouldn't you?

'I am ashamed to mention the poor dear Minister in a postscript. The truth is, I don't very well know what I am about. Mr. Grace-

dieu is quiet, sleeps better than he did, eats with a keener appetite, gives no trouble. But, alas, that glorious intellect is in a state of eclipse ! Do not suppose, because I write figuratively, that I am not sorry for him. He understands nothing ; he remembers nothing ; he has my prayers.

‘ You might come to us again, if you would only be so kind. It would make no difference now ; the poor man is so sadly altered. I must add, most reluctantly, that the doctor recommends your staying at home. Between ourselves, he is little better than a coward. Fancy his saying : “ No ; we must not run that risk yet.” I am barely civil to him, and no more.

‘ In any other affair (excuse me for troubling you with a second postscript), my sympathy with Euneece would have penetrated her motives ; I should have felt with her feelings. But I have never been in love ; no gentleman

gave me the opportunity when I was young. Now I am middle-aged, neglect has done its dreary work—my heart is an extinct crater. Figurative again ! I had better put my pen away, and say farewell for the present.’

Miss Jillgall may now give place to Eunice. The same day’s post brought me both letters.

I should be unworthy indeed of the trust which this affectionate girl has placed in me, if I failed to receive her explanation of her conduct towards Philip Dunboyne, as a sacred secret confided to my fatherly regard. In those later portions of her letter, which are not addressed to me confidentially, Eunice writes as follows :

‘ I get news—and what heartbreaking news ! —of my father, by sending a messenger to Selina. It is more than ever impossible that I can put myself in the way of seeing Helena again. She has written to me about Philip,

in a tone so shockingly insolent and cruel, that I have destroyed her letter. Philip's visit to the farm, discovered I don't know how, seems to have infuriated her. She accuses me of doing all that she might herself have done in my place, and threatens me—No ! I am afraid of the wicked whisperings of that second self of mine if I think of it. They were near to tempting me when I read Helena's letter. But I thought of what you said, after I had shown you my journal ; and your words took my memory back to the days when I was happy with Philip. The trial and the terror passed away.

‘ Consolation has come to me from the best of good women. Mrs. Staveley writes as lovingly as my mother might have written, if death had spared her. I have replied with all the gratitude that I really feel, but without taking advantage of the services which she offers. Mrs. Staveley has it in her mind, as

you had it in your mind, to bring Philip back to me. Does she forget, do you forget, that Helena claims him? But you both mean kindly, and I love you both for the interest that you feel in me.

‘The farmer’s wife—dear good soul!—hardly understands me so well as her husband does. She confesses to pitying Philip. “He is so wretched,” she says. “And, dear heart, how handsome, and what nice winning manners! I don’t think I should have had your courage, in your place. To tell the truth, I should have jumped for joy when I saw him at the door; and I should have run down to let him in—and perhaps been sorry for it afterwards. If you really wish to forget him, my dear, I will do all I can to help you.”

‘These are trifling things to mention, but I am afraid you may think I am unhappy—and I want to prevent that.

‘I have so much to be thankful for, and the

children are so fond of me. Whether I teach them as well as I might have done, if I had been a more learned girl, may perhaps be doubtful. They do more for their governess, I am afraid, than their governess does for them. When they come into my room in the morning, and rouse me with their kisses, the hour of waking, which used to be so hard to endure after Philip left me, is now the happiest hour of my day.'

With that reassuring view of her life as a governess, the poor child's letter comes to an end.

CHAPTER LI.

THE TRIUMPH OF MRS. TENBRUGGEN.

MISS JILLGALL appears again, after an interval, on the field of my extracts. My pleasant friend deserves this time a serious reception. She informs me that Mrs. Tenbruggen has begun the inquiries which I have the best reason to dread—for I alone know the end which they are designed to reach.

The arrival of this news affected me in two different ways.

It was discouraging to find that circumstances had not justified my reliance on Helena's enmity as a counter-influence to Mrs. Tenbruggen. On the other hand, it

was a relief to be assured that my return to London would serve, rather than compromise, the interests which it was my chief anxiety to defend. I had foreseen that Mrs. Tenbruggen would wait to set her enterprise on foot, until I was out of her way ; and I had calculated on my absence as an event which would at least put an end to suspense by encouraging her to begin.

The first sentences in Miss Jillgall's letter explain the nature of her interest in the proceedings of her friend, and are, on that account, worth reading.

‘ Things are sadly changed for the worse ’ (Selina writes) ; ‘ but I don't forget that Philip was once engaged to Euneece, and that Mr. Gracedieu's extraordinary conduct towards him puzzled us all. The mode of discovery which dear Elizabeth suggested by letter, at that time, appears to be the mode which she is following now. When I asked why, she

said: "Philip may return to Euneece; the Minister may recover—and will be all the more likely to do so if he tries Massage. In that case, he will probably repeat the conduct which surprised you; and your natural curiosity will ask me again to find out what it means. Am I your friend, Selina, or am I not?" This was so delightfully kind, and so irresistibly conclusive, that I kissed her in a transport of gratitude. With what breathless interest I have watched her progress towards penetrating the mystery of the girls' ages, it is quite needless to tell you.'

* * * * *

Mrs. Tenbruggen's method of keeping Miss Jillgall in ignorance of what she was really about, and Miss Jillgall's admirable confidence in the integrity of Mrs. Tenbruggen, being now set forth on the best authority, an exact presentation of the state of affairs will be completed if I add a word more, relating to the

positions actually occupied towards Mrs. Tenbruggen's enterprise, by my correspondent and myself.

On her side, Miss Jillgall was entirely ignorant that one of the two girls was not Mr. Gracedieu's daughter, but his adopted child. On my side, I was entirely ignorant of Mrs. Tenbruggen's purpose in endeavouring to identify the daughter of the murderess. Speaking of myself, individually, let me add that I only waited the event to protect the helpless ones—my poor demented friend, and the orphan whom his mercy received into his heart and his home.

Miss Jillgall goes on with her curious story, as follows :

* * * * *

‘ Always desirous of making myself useful, I thought I would give my dear Elizabeth a hint which might save time and trouble. “ Why not begin,” I suggested, “ by asking the Governor

to help you?" That wonderful woman never forgets anything. She had already applied to you, without success.

'In my next attempt to be useful I did violence to my most cherished convictions, by presenting the wretch Helena to the admirable Elizabeth. That the former would be cold as ice, in her reception of any friend of mine, was nothing wonderful. Mrs. Tenbruggen passed it over with the graceful composure of a woman of the world. In the course of conversation with Helena, she slipped in a question: "Might I ask if you are older than your sister?" The answer was of course: "I don't know." And here, for once, the most deceitful girl in existence spoke the truth.

'When we were alone again, Elizabeth made a remark: "If personal appearance could decide the question," she said, "the disagreeable young woman is the oldest of the two.

The next thing to be done is to discover if looks are to be trusted in this case."

'My friend's lawyer received confidential instructions (not shown to me, which seems rather hard) to trace the two Miss Gracedieus' registers of birth. Elizabeth described this proceeding (not very intelligibly to my mind) as a means of finding out which of the girls could be identified by name as the elder of the two.

'The report arrived this morning. I was only informed that the result, in one case, had entirely defeated the inquiries. In the other case, Elizabeth had helped her agent by referring him to a Birth, advertised in the customary column of the *Times* newspaper. Even here, there was a fatal obstacle. The name of the place in which Mr. Gracedieu's daughter had been born was not added as usual.

'I still tried to be useful. Had my friend known the Minister's wife? My friend had

never even seen the Minister's wife. And, as if by a fatality, her portrait was no longer in existence. I could only mention that Helena was like her mother. But Elizabeth seemed to attach very little importance to my evidence, if I may call it by so grand a name. "People have such strange ideas about likenesses," she said, "and arrive at such contradictory conclusions. One can only trust one's own eyes in a matter of that kind."

'My friend next asked me about our domestic establishment. We had only a cook and a housemaid. If they were old servants who had known the girls as children, they might be made of some use. Our luck was as steadily against us as ever. They had both been engaged when Mr. Gracedieu assumed his new pastoral duties, after having resided with his wife at her native place.

'I asked Elizabeth what she proposed to do next.

‘ She deferred her answer, until I had first told her whether the visit of the doctor might be expected on that day. I could reply to this in the negative. Elizabeth, thereupon, made a startling request ; she begged me to introduce her to Mr. Gracedieu.

‘ I said : “ Surely, you have forgotten the sad state of his mind ? ” No ; she knew perfectly well that he was imbecile. “ I want to try,” she explained, “ if I can rouse him for a few minutes.”

‘ “ By Massage ? ” I inquired.

‘ She burst out laughing. “ Massage, my dear, doesn’t act in that way. It is an elaborate process, pursued patiently for weeks together. But my hands have more than one accomplishment at their finger-ends. Oh, make your mind easy ! I shall do no harm, if I do no good. Take me, Selina, to the Minister.”

‘ We went to his room. Don’t blame me for

giving way ; I am too fond of Elizabeth to be able to disappoint her.

‘It was a sad sight when we went in. He was quite happy, playing like a child, at cup-and-ball. The attendant retired at my request. I introduced Mrs. Tenbruggen. He smiled and shook hands with her. He said : “Are you a Christian or a Pagan? You are very pretty. How many times can you catch the ball in the cup?” The effort to talk to her ended there. He went on with his game, and seemed to forget that there was anybody in the room. It made my heart ache to remember what he was—and to see him now.

‘Elizabeth whispered : “Leave me alone with him.”

‘I don’t know why I did such a rude thing—I hesitated.

‘Elizabeth asked me if I had no confidence in her. I was ashamed of myself ; I left them together.

‘A long half-hour passed. Feeling a little uneasy, I went upstairs again, and looked into the room. He was leaning back in his chair; his plaything was on the floor, and he was looking vacantly at the light that came in through the window. I found Mrs. Tenbruggen at the other end of the room, in the act of ringing the bell. Nothing in the least out of the ordinary way seemed to have happened. When the attendant had answered the bell, we left the room together. Mr. Gracedieu took no notice of us.

‘“Well,” I said, “how has it ended?”

‘Quite calmly, my noble Elizabeth answered: “In total failure.”

‘“What did you say to him after you sent me away?”

‘“I tried, in every possible way, to get him to tell me which of his two daughters was the oldest.”

‘“Did he refuse to answer?”

“ He was only too ready to answer. First, he said Helena was the oldest—then he corrected himself, and declared that Eunice was the oldest—then he said they were twins—then he went back to Helena and Eunice. Now one was the oldest, and now the other. He rang the changes on those two names, I can’t tell you how often, and seemed to think it a better game than cup-and-ball.”

“ What is to be done ?”

“ Nothing is to be done, Selina.”

“ What !” I cried, “ you give it up ?”

“ My heroic friend answered: “ I know when I am beaten, my dear—I give it up.” She looked at her watch; it was time to operate on the muscles of one of her patients. Away she went, on her glorious mission of Massage, without a murmur of regret. What strength of mind ! But, oh, dear, what a disappointment for poor little me ! On one thing I am determined. If I find myself getting puzzled

or frightened, I shall instantly write to you.'

With that expression of confidence in me, Selina's narrative came to an end. I wish I could have believed, as she did, that the object of her admiration had been telling her the truth.

A few days later, Mrs. Tenbruggen honoured me with a visit at my house in the neighbourhood of London. Thanks to this circumstance, I am able to add a postscript, which will complete the revelations in Miss Jillgall's letter.

The illustrious Masseur, having much to conceal from her faithful Selina, was well aware that she had only one thing to keep hidden from me—namely : the advantage which she would have gained, if her inquiries had met with success.

'I thought I might have got at what I

wanted,' she told me, 'by mesmerising our reverend friend. He is as weak as a woman ; I threw him into hysterics, and had to give it up, and quiet him, or he would have alarmed the house. You look as if you don't believe in mesmerism.'

' My looks, Mrs. Tenbruggen, exactly express my opinion. Mesmerism is humbug.'

' You amusing old Tory ! Shall I throw you into a state of trance ? No ! I'll give you a shock of another kind—a shock of surprise. I know as much as you do about Mr. Gracedieu's daughters. What do you think of that ?'

' I think I should like to hear you tell me, which is the adopted child.'

' Helena, to be sure !'

Her manner was defiant, her tone was positive ; I doubted both. Under the surface of her assumed confidence, I saw something which told me that she was trying to read my thoughts in my face. Many other women had

tried to do that. They succeeded when I was young. When I had reached the wrong side of fifty, my face had learned discretion, and they failed.

‘How did you arrive at your discovery?’ I asked. ‘I know of nobody who could have helped you.’

‘I helped myself, sir! I reasoned it out. A wonderful thing for a woman to do, isn’t it? I wonder whether you could follow the process?’

My reply to this was made by a bow. I was sure of my command over my face; but perfect control of the voice is a rare power. Here and there, a great actor or a great criminal possesses it.

Mrs. Tenbruggen’s vanity took me into her confidence. ‘In the first place,’ she said, ‘Helena is plainly the wicked one of the two. I was not prejudiced by what Selina had told me of her; I saw it, and felt it, before I had

been five minutes in her company. If lying tongues ever provoke her, as lying tongues provoked her mother, she will follow her mother's example. Very well. Now—in the second place—though it is very slight, there is a certain something in her hair and her complexion which reminds me of the murderess : there is no other resemblance, I admit. In the third place, the girls' names point to the same conclusion. Mr. Gracedieu is a Protestant and a Dissenter. Would he call a child of his own by the name of a Roman Catholic saint ? No ! he would prefer a name in the Bible ; Eunice is *his* child. And Helena was once the baby whom I carried into the prison. Do you deny that ?

‘ I don't deny it.’

Only four words ! But they were deceitfully spoken, and the deceit—practised in Eunice's interests, it is needless to say—succeeded. Mrs. Tenbruggen's object in visiting me was

attained ; I had confirmed her belief in the delusion that Helena was the adopted child.

She got up to take her leave. I asked if she proposed remaining in London. No ; she was returning to her country patients that night.

As I attended her to the house door, she turned to me with her mischievous smile. ‘I have taken some trouble in finding the clue to the Minister’s mystery,’ she said. ‘Don’t you wonder why?’

‘If I did wonder,’ I answered, ‘would you tell me why?’

She laughed at the bare idea of it. ‘Another lesson,’ she said, ‘to assist a helpless man in studying the weaker sex. I have already shown you that a woman can reason. Learn next that a woman can keep a secret. Good-bye. God bless you!’

Of the events which followed Mrs. Tenbruggen’s visit it is not possible for me, I am

thankful to say, to speak from personal experience. Ought I to conclude with an expression of repentance for the act of deception to which I have already pleaded guilty ? I don't know. Yes! the force of circumstances does really compel me to say it, and say it seriously—I declare, on my word of honour, I don't know.

Third Period: 1876.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.



CHAPTER LII.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

WHILE my father remains in his present helpless condition, somebody must assume a position of command in this house. There cannot be a moment's doubt that I am the person to do it.

In my agitated state of mind, sometimes doubtful of Philip, sometimes hopeful of him, I find Mrs. Tenbruggen simply unendurable. A female doctor is, under any circumstances, a creature whom I detest. She is, at her very best, a bad imitation of a man. The Medical Rubber is worse than this ; she is a bad imitation of a mountebank. Her grinning good-

humour, adopted no doubt to please the fools who are her patients, and her impudent enjoyment of hearing herself talk, make me regret for the first time in my life that I am a young lady. If I belonged to the lowest order of the population, I might take the first stick I could find, and enjoy the luxury of giving Mrs. Tenbruggen a good beating.

She literally haunts the house, encouraged, of course, by her wretched little dupe, Miss Jillgall. Only this morning, I tried what a broad hint would do towards suggesting that her visits had better come to an end.

‘Really, Mrs. Tenbruggen,’ I said, ‘I must request Miss Jillgall to moderate her selfish enjoyment of your company, for your own sake. Your time is too valuable, in a professional sense, to be wasted on an idle woman who has no sympathy with your patients, waiting for relief perhaps, and waiting in vain.’

She listened to this, all smiles and good-humour: 'My dear, do you know how I might answer you, if I was an ill-natured woman?'

'I have no curiosity to hear it, Mrs. Tenbruggen.'

'I might ask you,' she persisted, 'to allow me to mind my own business. But I am incapable of making an ungrateful return for the interest which you take in my medical welfare. Let me venture to ask if you understand the value of time.'

'Are you going to say much more, Mrs. Tenbruggen?'

'I am going to make a sensible remark, my child. If you feel tired, permit me—here is a chair. Father Time, dear Miss Gracedieu, has always been a good friend of mine, because I know how to make the best use of him. The author of the famous saying *Tempus fugit* (you understand Latin, of course) was, I take

leave to think, an idle man. The more I have to do, the readier Time is to wait for me. Let me impress this on your mind by some interesting examples. The greatest conqueror of the century—Napoleon—had time enough for everything. The greatest novelist of the century—Sir Walter Scott—had time enough for everything. At my humble distance, I imitate those illustrious men, and my patients never complain of me.'

'Have you done?' I asked.

'Yes, dear—for the present.'

'You are a clever woman, Mrs. Tenbruggen—and you know it. You have an eloquent tongue, and you know it. But you are something else, which you don't seem to be aware of. You are a Bore.'

She burst out laughing, with the air of a woman who thoroughly enjoyed a good joke. I looked back when I left the room, and saw

the friend of Father Time in the easy-chair opening our newspaper.

This is a specimen of the customary encounter of our wits. I place it on record in my Journal, to excuse myself *to myself*. When she left us at last, later in the day, I sent a letter after her to the hotel. Not having kept a copy of it, let me present the substance, like a sermon, under three heads : I begged to be excused for speaking plainly ; I declared that there was a total want of sympathy between us, on my side ; and I proposed that she should deprive me of future opportunities of receiving her in this house. The reply arrived immediately in these terms : ‘Your letter received, dear girl. I am not in the least angry ; partly because I am very fond of you, partly because I know that you will ask me to come back again. P.S. : Philip sends his love.’

This last piece of insolence was unquestionably a lie. Philip detests her. They are

both staying at the same hotel. But I happen to know that he won't even look at her, if they meet by accident on the stairs.

People who can enjoy the melancholy spectacle of human nature in a state of degradation would be at a loss which exhibition to prefer—an ugly old maid in a rage, or an ugly old maid in tears. Miss Jillgall presented herself in both characters when she heard what had happened. To my mind, Mrs. Tenbruggen's bosom-friend is a creature not fit to be seen or heard when she loses her temper. I only told her to leave the room. To my great amusement, she shook her bony fist at me, and expressed a frantic wish: 'Oh, if I was rich enough to leave this wicked house!' I wonder whether there is insanity (as well as poverty) in Miss Jillgall's family?

Last night my mind was in a harassed state. Philip was, as usual, the cause of it.

Perhaps I acted indiscreetly when I insisted on his leaving London, and returning to this place. But what else could I have done? It was not merely my interest, it was an act of downright necessity, to withdraw him from the influence of his hateful father—whom I now regard as the one serious obstacle to my marriage. There is no prospect of being rid of Mr. Dunboyne the elder by his returning to Ireland. He is trying a new remedy for his crippled hand—electricity. I wish it was lightning, to kill him! If I had given that wicked old man the chance, I am firmly convinced he would not have let a day pass without doing his best to depreciate me in his son's estimation. Besides, there was the risk, if I had allowed Philip to remain long away from me, of losing—no, while I keep my beauty I cannot be in such danger as that—let me say, of permitting time and absence to weaken my hold on him. However sullen and silent he

may be, when we meet—and I find him in that condition far too often—I can, sooner or later, recall him to his brighter self. My eyes preserve their charm, my talk can still amuse him, and, better even than that, I feel the answering thrill in him, which tells me how precious my kisses are—not too lavishly bestowed! But the time when I am obliged to leave him to himself, is the time that I dread. How do I know that his thoughts are not wandering away to Eunice? He denies it; he declares that he only went to the farmhouse to express his regret for his own thoughtless conduct, and to offer her the brotherly regard due to the sister of his promised wife. Can I believe it? Oh, what would I not give to be able to believe it! How can I feel sure that her refusal to see him was not a cunning device to make him long for another interview, and plan perhaps in private to go back and try again. Marriage! Nothing will quiet these

frightful doubts of mine, nothing will reward me for all that I have suffered, nothing will warm my heart with the delightful sense of triumph over Eunice, but my marriage to Philip. And what does he say, when I urge it on him?—yes, I have fallen as low as that, in the despair which sometimes possesses me. He has his answer, always the same, and always ready: ‘How are we to live? where is the money?’ The maddening part of it is that I cannot accuse him of raising objections that don’t exist. We are poorer than ever here, since my father’s illness—and Philip’s allowance is barely enough to suffice him as a single man. Oh, how I hate the rich!

It was useless to think of going to bed. How could I hope to sleep, with my head throbbing, and my thoughts in this disturbed state? I put on my comfortable dressing-gown, and sat down to try what reading would do to quiet my mind.

I had borrowed the book from the Library, to which I have been a subscriber in secret for some time past. It was an old volume, full of what we should now call Gossip; relating strange adventures, and scandalous incidents in family history which had been concealed from public notice.

One of these last romances in real life caught a strong hold on my interest.

It was a strange case of intended poisoning, which had never been carried out. A young married lady of rank, whose name was concealed under an initial letter, had suffered some unendurable wrong (which was not mentioned) at the hands of her husband's mother. The wife was described as a woman of strong passions, who had determined on a terrible revenge by taking the life of her mother-in-law. There were difficulties in the way of her committing the crime without an accomplice to help her; and she decided on

taking her maid, an elderly woman, into her confidence. The poison was secretly obtained by this person; and the safest manner of administering it was under discussion between the mistress and the maid, when the door of the room was suddenly opened. The husband, accompanied by his brother, rushed in, and charged his wife with plotting the murder of his mother. The young lady (she was only twenty-three) must have been a person of extraordinary courage and resolution. She saw at once that her maid had betrayed her, and, with astonishing presence of mind, she turned on the traitress, and said to her husband: 'There is the wretch who has been trying to persuade me to poison your mother!' As it happened, the old lady's temper was violent and overbearing; and the maid had complained of being ill-treated by her, in the hearing of the other servants. The circumstances made it impossible to decide

which of the two was really the guilty woman. The servant was sent away, and the husband and wife separated soon afterwards, under the excuse of incompatibility of temper. Years passed; and the truth was only discovered by the death-bed confession of the wife. A remarkable story, which has made such an impression on me that I have written it in my Journal. I am not rich enough to buy the book.

For the last two days, I have been confined to my room with a bad feverish cold—caught, as I suppose, by sitting at an open window reading my book till nearly three o'clock in the morning. I sent a note to Philip, telling him of my illness. On the first day, he called to inquire after me. On the second day, no visit, and no letter. Here is the third day—and no news of him as yet. I am better, but not fit to go out. Let me wait another hour,

and, if that exertion of patience meets with no reward, I shall send a note to the hotel.

No news of Philip. I have sent to the hotel.

The servant has just returned, bringing me back my note. The waiter informed her that Mr. Dunboyne had gone away to London by the morning train. No apology or explanation left for me.

Can he have deserted me? I am in such a frenzy of doubt and rage that I can hardly write that horrible question. Is it possible—oh, I feel it *is* possible that he has gone away with Eunice. Do I know where to find them? If I did know, what could I do? I feel as if I could kill them both!

CHAPTER LIII.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

AFTER the heat of my anger had cooled, I made two discoveries. One cost me a fee to a messenger, and the other exposed me to the insolence of a servant. I pay willingly in my purse and my pride, when the gain is peace of mind. Through my messenger I ascertained that Eunice had never left the farm. Through my own inquiries, answered by the waiter with an impudent grin, I heard that Philip had left orders to have his room kept for him. What misery our stupid housemaid might have spared me, if she had thought of putting that question when I sent her to the hotel!

The rest of the day passed in vain speculations on Philip's motive for this sudden departure. What poor weak creatures we are ! I persuaded myself to hope that anxiety for our marriage had urged him to make an effort to touch the heart of his mean father. Shall I see him to-morrow ? And shall I have reason to be fonder of him than ever ?

We met again to-day as usual. He has behaved infamously.

When I asked what had been his object in going to London, I was told that it was 'a matter of business.' He made that idiotic excuse as coolly as if he really thought I should believe it. I submitted in silence, rather than mar his return to me by the disaster of a quarrel. But this was an unlucky day. A harder trial of my self-control was still to come. Without the slightest appearance of shame, Philip informed me that

he was charged with a message from Mrs. Tenbruggen! She wanted some Irish lace, and would I be so good as to tell her which was the best shop at which she could buy it?

Was he really in earnest? 'You,' I said, 'who distrusted and detested her—you are on friendly terms with that woman?'

He remonstrated with me. 'My dear Helena, don't speak in that way of Mrs. Tenbruggen. We have both been mistaken about her. That good creature has forgiven the brutal manner in which I spoke to her, when she was in attendance on my father. She was the first to propose that we should shake hands and forget it. My darling, don't let all the good feeling be on one side. You have no idea how kindly she speaks of you, and how anxious she is to help us to be married. Come! come! meet her half-way. Write down the name of the shop on my card, and I will take it back to her.'

Sheer amazement kept me silent ; I let him go on. He was a mere child in the hands of Mrs. Tenbruggen : she had only to determine to make a fool of him, and she could do it.

But why did she do it ? What advantage had she to gain by insinuating herself in this way into his good opinion, evidently with the intention of urging him to reconcile us to each other ? How could we two poor young people be of the smallest use to the fashionable Masseuse ?

My silence began to irritate Philip. ‘ I never knew before how obstinate you could be,’ he said ; ‘ you seem to be doing your best—I can’t imagine why—to lower yourself in my estimation.’

I held my tongue ; I assumed my smile. It is all very well for men to talk about the deceitfulness of women. What chance (I should like to ask somebody who knows about

it) do the men give us of making our lives with them endurable, except by deceit ! I gave way, of course, and wrote down the address of the shop.

He was so pleased that he kissed me. Yes ! the most fondly affectionate kiss that he had given me, for weeks past, was my reward for submitting to Mrs. Tenbruggen. She is old enough to be his mother, and almost as ugly as Miss Jillgall—and she has made her interests his interests already !

On the next day, I fully expected to receive a visit from Mrs. Tenbruggen. She knew better than that. I only got a polite little note, thanking me for the address, and adding an artless confession : ‘I earn more money than I know what to do with ; and I adore Irish lace.’

The next day came, and still she was careful not to show herself too eager for a personal

reconciliation. A splendid nosegay was sent to me, with another little note : ' A tribute, dear Helena, offered by one of my grateful patients. Too beautiful a present for an old woman like me. I agree with the poet : "Sweets to the sweet." A charming thought of Shakspeare's, is it not ? I should like to verify the quotation. Would you mind leaving the volume for me in the hall, if I call to-morrow ?'

Well done, Mrs. Tenbruggen ! She doesn't venture to intrude on Miss Gracedieu in the drawing-room ; she only wants to verify a quotation in the hall. Oh, goddess of Humility (if there is such a person), how becomingly you are dressed when your milliner is an artful old woman !

While this reflection was passing through my mind, Miss Jillgall came in—saw the nosegay on the table—and instantly pounced on it. ' Oh, for me ! for me !' she cried. ' I noticed it

this morning on Elizabeth's table. How very kind of her !' She plunged her inquisitive nose into the poor flowers, and looked up sentimentally at the ceiling. 'The perfume of goodness,' she remarked, 'mingled with the perfume of flowers !' 'When you have quite done with it,' I said, 'perhaps you will be so good as to return my nosegay ?' '*Your* nosegay !' she exclaimed. 'There is Mrs. Tenbruggen's letter,' I replied, 'if you would like to look at it.' She did look at it. All the bile in her body flew up into her eyes, and turned them green ; she looked as if she longed to scratch my face. I gave the flowers afterwards to Maria ; Miss Jillgall's nose had completely spoilt them.

It would have been too ridiculous to have allowed Mrs. Tenbruggen to consult Shakspeare in the hall. I had the honour of receiving her in my own room. We accomplished a touch-

ing reconciliation, and we quite forgot Shakspeare.

She troubles me ; she does indeed trouble me.

Having set herself entirely right with Philip, she is determined on performing the same miracle with me. Her reform of herself is already complete. Her vulgar humour was kept under strict restraint ; she was quiet and well-bred, and readier to listen than to talk. This change was not presented abruptly. She contrived to express her friendly interest in Philip and in me by hints dropped here and there, assisted in their effect by answers on my part, into which I was tempted so skilfully that I only discovered the snare set for me, on reflection. What is it, I ask again, that she has in view in taking all this trouble ? Where is her motive for encouraging a love-affair, which Miss Jillgall must have denounced to her as an abominable wrong inflicted on

Eunice ? Money (even if there was a prospect of such a thing, in our case) cannot be her object; it is quite true that her success sets her above pecuniary anxiety. Spiteful feeling against Eunice is out of the question. They have only met once ; and her opinion was expressed to me with evident sincerity : ‘ Your sister is a nice girl, but she is like other nice girls—she doesn’t interest me.’ There is Eunice’s character, drawn from the life in few words. In what an irritating position do I find myself placed ! Never before have I felt so interested in trying to look into a person’s secret mind ; and never before have I been so completely baffled.

I had written as far as this, and was on the point of closing my Journal, when a third note arrived from Mrs. Tenbruggen.

She had been thinking about me at intervals (she wrote) all through the rest of the day ; and, kindly as I had received her, she was

conscious of being the object of doubts on my part which her visit had failed to remove. Might she ask leave to call on me, in the hope of improving her position in my estimation? An appointment followed for the next day.

What can she have to say to me which she has not already said? Is it anything about Philip, I wonder?

CHAPTER LIV.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

AT our interview of the next day, Mrs. Tenbruggen's capacity for self-reform appeared under a new aspect. She dropped all familiarity with me, and she stated the object of her visit without a superfluous word of explanation or apology.

I thought this a remarkable effort for a woman ; and I recognised the merit of it by leaving the lion's share of the talk to my visitor. In these terms she opened her business with me :

‘Has Mr. Philip Dunboyne told you why he went to London ?’

‘He made a commonplace excuse,’ I answered. ‘Business, he said, took him to London. I know no more.’

‘You have a fair prospect of happiness, Miss Helena, when you are married—your future husband is evidently afraid of you. I am not afraid of you; and I shall confide to your private ear something which you have an interest in knowing. The business which took young Mr. Dunboyne to London was to consult a competent person, on a matter concerning himself. The competent person is the sagacious (not to say sly) old gentleman, whom we used to call the Governor. You know him, I believe?’

‘Yes. But I am at a loss to imagine why Philip should have consulted him.’

‘Have you ever heard or read, Miss Helena, of such a thing as “an old man’s fancy”?’

‘I think I have.’

‘Well, the Governor has taken an old man’s

fancy to your sister. They appeared to understand each other perfectly when I was at the farmhouse.'

'Excuse me, Mrs. Tenbruggen, that is what I know already. Why did Philip go to the Governor?'

She smiled. 'If anybody is acquainted with the true state of your sister's feelings, the Governor is the man. I sent Mr. Dunboyne to consult him—and there is the reason for it.'

This open avowal of her motives perplexed and offended me. After declaring herself to be interested in my marriage-engagement, had she changed her mind, and resolved on favouring Philip's return to Eunice? What right had he to consult anybody about the state of that girl's feelings? *My* feelings form the only subject of inquiry that was properly open to him. I should have said something which I might have afterwards regretted, if Mrs. Tenbruggen had allowed me the opportunity.

Fortunately for both of us, she went on with her narrative of her own proceedings.

‘Philip Dunboyne is an excellent fellow,’ she continued; ‘I really like him—but he has his faults. He sadly wants strength of purpose; and, like weak men in general, he only knows his own mind when a resolute friend takes him in hand and guides him. I am his resolute friend. I saw him veering about between you and Eunice; and I decided for his sake—may I say for your sake also?—on putting an end to that mischievous state of indecision. You have the claim on him; you are the right wife for him—and the Governor was (as I thought likely from what I had myself observed) the man to make him see it. I am not in anybody’s secrets; it was pure guess-work on my part, and it has succeeded. There is no more doubt now about Miss Eunice’s sentiments. The question is settled.’

‘ In my favour ?’

‘ Certainly in your favour—or I should not have said a word about it.’

‘ Was Philip’s visit kindly received ? Or did the old wretch laugh at him ?’

‘ My dear Miss Gracedieu, the old wretch is a man of the world, and never makes mistakes of that sort. Before he could open his lips, he had to satisfy himself that your lover deserved to be taken into his confidence, on the delicate subject of Eunice’s sentiments. He arrived at a favourable conclusion. I can repeat Philip’s questions and the Governor’s answers—after putting the young man through a stiff examination — just as they passed : “ May I inquire, sir, if she has spoken to you about me ? ” “ She has often spoken about you.” “ Did she seem to be angry with me ? ” “ She is too good and too sweet to be angry with you.” “ Do you think she will forgive me ? ” “ She has forgiven you.” “ Did she

say so herself?" "Yes, of her own free will."
"Why did she refuse to see me when I called at the farm?" "She had her own reasons—good reasons." "Has she regretted it since?" "Certainly not." "Is it likely that she would consent, if I proposed a reconciliation?" "I put that question to her myself." "How did she take it, sir?" "She declined to take it." "You mean that she declined a reconciliation?" "Yes." "Are you sure she was in earnest?" "I am positively sure." That last answer seems, by young Dunboyne's own confession, to have been enough, and more than enough for him. He got up to go—and then an odd thing happened. After giving him the most unfavourable answers, the Governor patted him paternally on the shoulder, and encouraged him to hope. "Before we say good-bye, Mr. Philip, one word more. If I was as young as you are, I should not despair." There is a sudden change of front! Who can explain it?

The Governor's mischievous resolution to reconcile Philip and Eunice explained it, of course. With the best intentions (perhaps) Mrs. Tenbruggen had helped that design by bringing the two men together. 'Go on,' I said; 'I am prepared to hear next that Philip has paid another visit to my sister, and has been received this time.'

I must say this for Mrs. Tenbruggen; she kept her temper perfectly.

'He has not been to the farm,' she said, 'but he has done something nearly as foolish. He has written to your sister.'

'And he has received a favourable reply, of course?'

She put her hand into the pocket of her dress.

'There is your sister's reply,' she said.

Any persons who have had a crushing burden lifted, unexpectedly and instantly, from off their minds, will know what I felt when I

read the reply. In the most positive language, Eunice refused to correspond with Philip, or to speak with him. The concluding words proved that she was in earnest: 'You are engaged to Helena. Consider me as a stranger until you are married. After that time you will be my brother-in-law, and then I may pardon you for writing to me.'

Nobody who knows Eunice would have supposed that she possessed those two valuable qualities — common-sense and proper pride. It is pleasant to feel that I can now send cards to my sister, when I am Mrs. Philip Dunboyne.

I returned the letter to Mrs. Tenbruggen, with the sincerest expressions of regret for having doubted her. 'I have been unworthy of your generous interest in me,' I said; 'I am almost ashamed to offer you my hand.'

She took my hand, and gave it a good, hearty shake.

‘Are we friends?’ she asked in the simplest and prettiest manner. ‘Then let us be easy and pleasant again,’ she went on. ‘Will you call me Elizabeth; and shall I call you Helena? Very well. Now I have got something else to say; another secret which must be kept from Philip (I call *him* by his name now, you see) for a few days more. Your happiness, my dear, must not depend on his miserly old father. He must have a little income of his own to marry on. Among the hundreds of unfortunate wretches whom I have relieved from torture of mind and body, there is a grateful minority. Small! small! but there they are. I have influence among powerful people; and I am trying to make Philip private secretary to a member of Parliament. When I have succeeded, you shall tell him the good news.’

What a vile humour I must have been in, at the time, not to have appreciated the de-

lightful gaiety of this good creature; I went to the other extreme now, and behaved like a gushing young Miss fresh from school. I kissed her.

She burst out laughing. 'What a sacrifice!' she cried. 'A kiss for me, which ought to have been kept for Philip! By-the-bye, do you know what I should do, Helena, in your place? I should take our handsome young man away from that hotel!'

'I will do anything that you advise,' I said.

'And you will do well, my child. In the first place, the hotel is too expensive for Philip's small means. In the second place, two of the chambermaids have audaciously presumed to be charming girls; and the men, my dear—well! well! I will leave you to find that out for yourself. In the third place, you want to have Philip under your own wing; domestic familiarity will make him fonder of

you than ever. Keep him out of the sort of company that he meets with in the billiard-room and the smoking-room. You have got a spare bed here, I know, and your poor father is in no condition to use his authority. Make Philip one of the family.'

This last piece of advice staggered me. I mentioned the Proprieties. Mrs. Tenbruggen laughed at the Proprieties.

'Make Selina of some use,' she suggested. 'While you have got *her* in the house, Propriety is rampant. Why condemn poor helpless Philip to cheap lodgings? Time enough to cast him out to the feather-bed and the fleas, on the night before your marriage. Besides, I shall be in and out constantly—for I mean to cure your father. The tongue of scandal is silent in my awful presence; an atmosphere of virtue surrounds Mamma Tenbruggen. Think of it.'

CHAPTER LV.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

I DID think of it. Philip came to us, and lived in our house.

Let me hasten to add that the protest of Propriety was duly entered, on the day before my promised husband arrived. Standing in the doorway—nothing would induce her to take a chair, or even to enter the room—Miss Jillgall delivered her opinion on Philip's approaching visit. Mrs. Tenbruggen reported it in her pocket-book, as if she was representing a newspaper at a public meeting. Here it is, copied from her notes :

‘ Miss Helena Gracedieu, my first impulse

under the present disgusting circumstances, was to leave the house, and earn a bare crust in the cheapest garret I could find in the town. But my grateful heart remembers Mr. Gracedieu. My poor afflicted cousin was good to me when I was helpless. I cannot forsake him when *he* is helpless. At whatever sacrifice of my own self-respect, I remain under this roof, so dear to me for the Minister's sake. I notice, Miss, that you smile. I see my once dear Elizabeth, the friend who has so bitterly disappointed me——' she stopped, and put her handkerchief to her eyes, and went on again—'the friend who has so bitterly disappointed me, taking satirical notes of what I say. I am not ashamed of what I say. The virtue which will not stretch a little, where the motive is good, is feeble virtue indeed. I shall stay in the house, and witness horrors, and rise superior to them. Good-morning, Miss Gracedieu. Good-morning, Elizabeth.' She per-

formed a magnificent curtsy, and (as Mrs. Tenbruggen's experience of the stage informed me) made a very creditable exit.

A week has passed, and I have not opened my Diary.

My days have glided away in one delicious flow of happiness. Philip has been delightfully devoted to me. His fervent courtship, far exceeding any similar attentions which he may once have paid to Eunice, has shown such variety and such steadfastness of worship, that I despair of describing it. My enjoyment of my new life is to be felt—not to be coldly considered, and reduced to an imperfect statement in words.

For the first time I feel capable, if the circumstances encouraged me, of acts of exalted virtue. For instance, I could save my country if my country was worth it. I could die a martyr to religion if I had a religion.

In one word, I am exceedingly well satisfied with myself.

The little disappointments of life pass over me harmless. I do not even regret the failure of good Mrs. Tenbruggen's efforts to find an employment for Philip, worthy of his abilities and accomplishments. The member of Parliament to whom she had applied has chosen a secretary possessed of political influence. That is the excuse put forward in his letter to Mrs. Tenbruggen. Wretched corrupt creature! If he was worth a thought I should pity him. He has lost Philip's services.

Three days more have slipped by. The aspect of my heaven on earth is beginning to alter.

Perhaps the author of that wonderful French novel, 'L'Ame Damnée,' is right when he tells us that human happiness is misery in masquerade. It would be wrong to say that I

am miserable. But I may be on the way to it; I am anxious.

To-day, when he did not know that I was observing him, I discovered a preoccupied look in Philip's eyes. He laughed when I asked if anything had happened to vex him. Was it a natural laugh? He put his arm round me and kissed me. Was it done mechanically? I dare say I am out of humour myself. I think I had a little headache. Morbid, probably. I won't think of it any more.

It has occurred to me this morning that he may dislike being left by himself, while I am engaged in my household affairs. If this is the case, intensely as I hate her, utterly as I loathe the idea of putting her in command over my domestic dominions, I shall ask Miss Jillgall to take my place as housekeeper.

I was away to-day in the kitchen regions rather longer than usual. When I had done

with my worries, Philip was not to be found. Maria, looking out of one of the bedroom windows instead of doing her work, had seen Mr. Dunboyne leave the house. It was possible that he had charged Miss Jillgall with a message for me. I asked if she was in her room. No ; she, too, had gone out. It was a fine day, and Philip had no doubt taken a stroll—but he might have waited till I could join him. There were some orders to be given to the butcher and the greengrocer. I, too, left the house, hoping to get rid of some little discontent, caused by thinking of what had happened.

Returning by the way of High Street—I declare I can hardly believe it even now—I did positively see Miss Jillgall coming out of a pawnbroker's shop !

The direction in which she turned prevented her from seeing me. She was quite unaware that I had discovered her ; and I have said

nothing about it since. But I noticed something unusual in the manner in which her watch-chain was hanging, and I asked her what o'clock it was. She said, 'You have got your own watch.' I told her my watch had stopped. 'So has mine,' she said. There is no doubt about it now; she has pawned her watch. What for? She lives here for nothing, and she has not had a new dress since I have known her. Why does she want money?

Philip had not returned when I got home. Another mysterious journey to London? No. After an absence of more than two hours, he came back.

Naturally enough, I asked what he had been about. He had been taking a long walk. For his health's sake? No: to think. To think of what? Well, I might be surprised to hear it, but his idle life was beginning to weigh on his spirits; he wanted employment.

Had he thought of an employment? Not yet. Which way had he walked? Anyway: he had not noticed where he went. These replies were all made in a tone that offended me. Besides, I observed there was no dust on his boots (after a week of dry weather), and his walk of two hours did not appear to have heated or tired him. I took an opportunity of consulting Mrs. Tenbruggen.

She had anticipated that I should appeal to her opinion, as a woman of the world.

I shall not set down in detail what she said. Some of it humiliated me; and from some of it I recoiled. The expression of her opinion came to this. In the absence of experience, a certain fervour of temperament was essential to success in the art of fascinating men. Either my temperament was deficient, or my intellect overpowered it. It was natural that I should suppose myself to be as susceptible to the tender passion as the most excitable

woman living. Delusion, my Helena, amiable delusion! Had I ever observed or had any friend told me, that my pretty hands were cold hands? I had beautiful eyes, expressive of vivacity, of intelligence, of every feminine charm, except the one inviting charm that finds favour in the eyes of a man. She then entered into particulars, which I don't deny showed a true interest in helping me. I was ungrateful, sulky, self-opinionated. Dating from that day's talk with Mrs. Tenbruggen, my new friendship began to show signs of having caught a chill.

But I did my best to follow her instructions—and failed.

It is perhaps true that my temperament is overpowered by my intellect. Or it is possibly truer still that the fire in my heart, when it warms to love, is a fire that burns low. My belief is that I surprised Philip instead of charming him. He responded to my ad-

vances, but I felt that it was not done in earnest, not spontaneously. Had I any right to complain? Was I in earnest? Was I spontaneous? We were making love to each other under false pretences. Oh, what a fool I was to ask for Mrs. Tenbruggen's advice!

A humiliating doubt has come to me suddenly. Has his heart been inclining to Eunice again? After such a letter as she has written to him? Impossible!

Three events since yesterday, which I consider, trifling as they may be, intimations of something wrong.

First, Miss Jillgall, who at one time was eager to take my place, has refused to relieve me of my housekeeping duties. Secondly, Philip has been absent again, on another long walk. Thirdly, when Philip returned, depressed and sulky, I caught Miss Jillgall looking at him with interest and pity visible

in her skinny face. What do these things mean ?

I am beginning to doubt everybody. Not one of them, Philip included, cares for me—but I can frighten them, at any rate. Yesterday evening, I dropped on the floor as suddenly as if I had been shot : a fit of some sort. The doctor honestly declared that he was at a loss to account for it. He would have laid me under an eternal obligation if he had failed to bring me back to life again.

As it is, I am more clever than the doctor. What brought the fit on is well known to me. Rage—furious, overpowering, deadly rage—was the cause. I am now in the cold-blooded state, which can look back at the event as composedly as if it had happened to some other girl. Suppose that girl had let her sweetheart know how she loved him, as she

had never let him know it before. Suppose she opened the door again the instant after she had left the room, eager, poor wretch, to say, once more, for the fiftieth time, 'My angel, I love you!' Suppose she found her angel standing with his back towards her, so that his face was reflected in the glass. And suppose she discovered in that face, so smiling and so sweet when his head had rested on her bosom only the moment before, the most hideous expression of disgust that features can betray. There could be no doubt of it; I had made my poor offering of love to a man who secretly loathed me. I wonder that I survived my sense of my own degradation. Well! I am alive; and I know him in his true character at last. Am I a woman who submits when an outrage is offered to her? What will happen next? Who knows?

I am in a fine humour. What I have just written has set me laughing at myself. Helena

Gracedieu has one merit at least—she is a very amusing person.

I slept last night.

This morning, I am strong again, calm, wickedly capable of deceiving Mr. Philip Dunboyne, as he has deceived me. He has not the faintest suspicion that I have discovered him. I wish he had courage enough to kill somebody. How I should enjoy hiring the nearest window to the scaffold, and seeing him hanged !

Miss Jillgall is in better spirits than ever. She is going to take a little holiday ; and the cunning creature makes a mystery of it. ‘ Good-bye, Miss Helena. I am going to stay for a day or two with a friend.’ What friend ? Who cares ?

Last night, I was wakeful. In the darkness a daring idea came to me. To-day, I have

carried out the idea. Something has followed which is well worth entering in my Diary.

I left the room at the usual hour for attending to my domestic affairs. The obstinate cook did me a service ; she was insolent ; she wanted to have her own way. I gave her her own way. In less than five minutes I was on the watch in the pantry, which has a view of the house door. My hat and my parasol were waiting for me on the table, in case of my going out, too.

In a few minutes more, I heard the door opened. Mr. Philip Dunboyne stepped out. He was going to take another of his long walks.

I followed him to the street in which the cabs stand. He hired the first one on the rank, an open chaise ; while I kept myself hidden in a shop door.

The moment he started on his drive, I hired a closed cab. 'Double your fare,' I said to

the driver, 'whatever it may be, if you follow that chaise cleverly, and do what I tell you.'

He nodded and winked at me. A wicked-looking old fellow ; just the man I wanted.

We followed the chaise.

CHAPTER LVI.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

WHEN we had left the town behind us, the coachman began to drive more slowly. In my ignorance, I asked what this change in the pace meant. He pointed with his whip to the open road and to the chaise in the distance.

‘If we keep too near the gentleman, Miss, he has only got to look back, and he’ll see we are following him. The safe thing to do is to let the chaise get on a bit. We can’t lose sight of it, out here.’

I had felt inclined to trust in the driver’s experience, and he had already justified my confidence in him. This encouraged me to

consult his opinion on a matter of some importance to my present interests. I could see the necessity of avoiding discovery when we had followed the chaise to its destination ; but I was totally at a loss to know how it could be done. My wily old man was ready with his advice the moment I asked for it.

‘Wherever the chaise stops, Miss, we must drive past it as if we were going somewhere else. I shall notice the place while we go by ; and you will please sit back in the corner of the cab so that the gentleman can’t see you.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘and what next ?’

‘Next, Miss, I shall pull up, wherever it may be, out of sight of the driver of the chaise. He bears an excellent character, I don’t deny it ; but I’ve known him for years—and we had better not trust him. I shall tell you where the gentleman stopped ; and you will go back to the place (on foot, of course), and see for yourself what’s to be done, specially if there

happens to be a lady in the case. No offence, Miss ; it's in my experience that there's generally a lady in the case. Anyhow, you can judge for yourself, and you'll know where to find me waiting when you want me again.'

'Suppose something happens,' I suggested, 'that we don't expect?'

'I shan't lose my head, Miss, whatever happens.'

'All very well, coachman ; but I have only your word for it.' In the irritable state of my mind, the man's confident way of talking annoyed me.

'Begging your pardon, my young lady, you've got (if I may say so) what they call a guarantee. When I was a youngman, I drove a cab in London for ten years. Will that do?'

'I suppose you mean,' I answered, 'that you have learned deceit in the wicked ways of the great city.'

He took this as a compliment. 'Thank you, Miss. That's it exactly.'

After a long drive, or so it seemed to my impatience, we passed the chaise drawn up at a lonely house, separated by a front garden from the road. In two or three minutes more, we stopped where the road took a turn, and descended to lower ground. The farmhouse which we had left behind us was known to the driver. He led the way to a gate at the side of the road, and opened it for me.

'In your place, Miss,' he said slyly, 'the private way back is the way I should wish to take. Try it by the fields. Turn to the right when you have passed the barn, and you'll find yourself at the back of the house.' He stopped, and looked at his big silver watch. 'Half-past twelve,' he said, 'the Chawbacons—I mean the farmhouse servants, Miss—will be at their dinner. All in your favour, so far. If the dog happens to be loose, don't forget

that his name's Grinder ; call him by his name, and pat him before he has time enough to think, and he'll let you be. When you want me, here you'll find me waiting for orders.'

I looked back as I crossed the field. The driver was sitting on the gate, smoking his pipe, and the horse was nibbling the grass at the roadside. Two happy animals, without a burden on their minds !

After passing the barn, I saw nothing of the dog. Far or near, no living creature appeared ; the servants must have been at dinner, as the coachman had foreseen. Arriving at a wooden fence, I opened a gate in it, and found myself on a bit of waste ground. On my left, there was a large duck-pond. On my right, I saw the fowl-house and the pigstyes. Before me was a high impenetrable hedge ; and at some distance behind it—an orchard or a garden, as I supposed, filling the intermediate space—rose the back of the house. I made for the

shelter of the hedge, in the fear that someone might approach a window and see me. Once sheltered from observation, I might consider what I should do next. It was impossible to doubt that this was the house in which Eunice was living. Neither could I fail to conclude that Philip had tried to persuade her to see him, on those former occasions when he told me he had taken a long walk.

As I crouched behind the hedge, I heard voices approaching on the other side of it. At last fortune had befriended me. The person speaking at the moment was Miss Jillgall; and the person who answered her was Philip.

‘I am afraid, dear Mr. Philip, you don’t quite understand my sweet Eunece. Honourable, high-minded, delicate in her feelings, and, oh, so unselfish! I don’t want to alarm you, but when she hears you have been deceiving Helena——’

‘Upon my word, Miss Jillgall, you are too

provoking ! I have *not* been deceiving Helena. Haven't I told you what discouraging answers I got, when I went to see the Governor ? Haven't I shown you Eunice's reply to my letter ? You can't have forgotten it already ?

' Oh, yes, I have. Why should I remember it ? Don't I know poor Euneece was in your mind, all the time ?

' You're wrong again ! Eunice was *not* in my mind all the time. I was hurt—I was offended by the cruel manner in which she had treated me. And what was the consequence ? So far was I from deceiving Helena—she rose in my estimation by comparison with her sister.'

' Oh, come, come, Mr. Philip ! that won't do. Helena rising in anybody's estimation ? Ha ! ha ! ha !

' Laugh as much as you like, Miss Jillgall, you won't laugh away the facts. Helena loved me ; Helena was true to me. Don't be hard

on a poor fellow who is half distracted. What a man finds he can do on one day, he finds he can't do on another. Try to understand that a change does sometimes come over one's feelings.'

'Bless my soul, Mr. Philip, that's just what I have been understanding all the time! I know your mind as well as you know it yourself. You can't forget my sweet Euneece.'

'I tell you I tried to forget her! On my word of honour as a gentleman, I tried to forget her, in justice to Helena. Is it my fault that I failed? Eunice was in my mind, as you said just now. Oh, my friend—for you are my friend, I am sure—persuade her to see me, if it's only for a minute!'

(Was there ever a man's mind in such a state of confusion as this! First, I rise in his precious estimation, and Eunice drops. Then Eunice rises, and I drop. Idiot! Mischievous

idiot ! Even Selina seemed to be disgusted with him, when she spoke next.)

‘ Mr. Philip, you are hard and unreasonable. I have tried to persuade her, and I have made my darling cry. Nothing you can say will induce me to distress her again. Go back, you very undetermined man—go back to your Helena.’

‘ Too late.’

‘ Nonsense !’

‘ I say too late. If I could have married Helena when I first went to stay in the house, I might have faced the sacrifice. As it is, I can’t endure her ; and (I tell you this in confidence) she has herself to thank for what has happened.’

‘ Is that really true ?’

‘ Quite true.’

‘ Tell me what she did.’

‘ Oh, don’t talk of her ! Persuade Eunice to see me. I shall come back again, and again, and again till you bring her to me.’

‘ Please don’t talk nonsense. If she changes her mind, I will bring her with pleasure. If she still shrinks from it, I regard Euneece’s feelings as sacred. Take my advice ; don’t press her. Leave her time to think of you, and to pity you—and that true heart may be yours again, if you are worthy of it.’

‘ Worthy of it ? What do you mean ?’

‘ Are you quite sure, my young friend, that you won’t go back to Helena ?’

‘ Go back to *her* ? I would cut my throat if I thought myself capable of doing it !’

‘ How did she set you against her ? Did the wretch quarrel with you ?’

‘ It might have been better for both of us if she had done that. Oh, her fulsome endearments ! What a contrast to the charming modesty of Eunice ! If I was rich, I would make it worth the while of the first poor fellow I could find to rid me of Helena by marrying her. I don’t like saying such

a thing of a woman, but if you will have the truth——’

‘ Well, Mr. Philip—and what is the truth ?’

‘ Helena disgusts me.’

CHAPTER LVII.

HELENA'S DIARY RESUMED.

So it was all settled between them. Philip is to throw me away, like one of his bad cigars, for this unanswerable reason: 'Helena disgusts me.' And he is to persuade Eunice to take my place, and be his wife. Yes! if I let him do it.

I heard no more of their talk. With that last, worst outrage burning in my memory, I left the place.

On my way back to the carriage, the dog met me. Truly, a grand creature. I called him by his name, and patted him. He licked my hand. Something made me speak to him.

I said : ‘ If I was to tell you to tear Mr. Philip Dunboyne to pieces, would you do it ?’ The great good-natured brute held out his paw to shake hands. Well ! well ! I was not an object of disgust to the dog.

But the coachman was startled, when he saw me again. He said something, I did not know what it was ; and he produced a pocket-flask, containing some spirits, I suppose. Perhaps he thought I was going to faint. He little knew me. I told him to drive back to the place at which I had hired the cab, and earn his money. He earned it.

On getting home, I found Mrs. Tenbruggen walking up and down the dining-room, deep in thought. She was startled when we first confronted each other. ‘ You look dreadfully ill,’ she said.

I answered that I had been out for a little exercise, and had over-fatigued myself ; and then changed the subject. ‘ Does my father

seem to improve under your treatment?' I asked.

'Very far from it, my dear. I promised that I would try what Massage would do for him, and I find myself compelled to give it up.'

'Why?'

'It excites him dreadfully.'

'In what way?'

'He has been talking wildly of events in his past life. His brain is in some condition which is beyond my powers of investigation. He pointed to a cabinet in his room, and said his past life was locked up there. I asked if I should unlock it. He shook with fear; he said I should let out the ghost of his dead brother-in-law. Have you any idea of what he meant?'

The cabinet was full of old letters. I could tell her that—and could tell her no more. I had never heard of his brother-in-law. Another

of his delusions, no doubt. 'Did you ever hear him speak,' Mrs. Tenbruggen went on, 'of a place called Low Lanes?'

She waited for my reply to this last inquiry, with an appearance of anxiety that surprised me. I had never heard him speak of Low Lanes.

'Have you any particular interest in the place?' I asked.

'None whatever.'

She went away to attend on a patient. I retired to my bedroom, and opened my Diary. Again and again, I read that remarkable story of the intended poisoning, and of the manner in which it had ended. I sat thinking over this romance in real life, till I was interrupted by the announcement of dinner.

Mr. Philip Dunboyne had returned. In Miss Jillgall's absence we were alone at the table. My appetite was gone. I made a pretence of eating, and another pretence of

being glad to see my devoted lover. I talked to him in the prettiest manner. As a hypocrite, he thoroughly matched me ; he was gallant, he was amusing. If baseness like ours had been punishable by the law, a prison was the right place for both of us.

Mrs. Tenbruggen came in again, after dinner, still not quite easy about my health. 'How flushed you are!' she said. 'Let me feel your pulse.' I laughed, and left her with Mr. Philip Dunboyne.

Passing my father's door, I looked in, anxious to see if he was in the excitable state which Mrs. Tenbruggen had described. Yes ; the effect which she had produced on him—how, she knows best—had not passed away yet : he was still talking. The attendant told me it had gone on for hours together. On my approaching his chair, he called out : 'Which are you ? Eunice or Helena ?' When I had answered him, he beckoned me to come nearer.

‘ I’m getting stronger every minute,’ he said.
‘ We will go travelling to-morrow, and see the place where you were born.’

Where had I been born ? He had never told me where. Had he mentioned the place in Mrs. Tenbruggen’s hearing ? I asked the attendant if he had been present while she was in the room. Yes ; he had remained at his post ; he had also heard the allusion to the place with the odd name. Had Mr. Gracedieu said anything more about that place ? Nothing more ; the poor Minister’s mind had wandered off to other things. He was wandering now. Sometimes, he was addressing his congregation ; sometimes, he wondered what they would give him for supper ; sometimes, he talked of the flowers in the garden. And then he looked at me, and frowned, and said I prevented him from thinking.

I went back to my bedroom, and opened my Diary, and read the story again.

Was the poison of which that resolute young wife proposed to make use, something that acted slowly, and told the doctors nothing if they looked for it after death?

Would it be running too great a risk to show the story to the doctor, and try to get a little valuable information in that way? It would be useless. He would make some feeble joke; he would say, girls and poisons are not fit company for each other.

But I might discover what I want to know in another way. I might call on the doctor, after he has gone out on his afternoon round of visits, and might tell the servant I would wait for his master's return. Nobody would be in my way; I might get at the medical literature in the consulting-room, and find the information for myself.

A knock at my door interrupted me in the midst of my plans. Mrs. Tenbruggen again!—still in a fidgety state of feeling on the

subject of my health. 'Which is it?' she said. 'Pain of body, my dear, or pain of mind? I am anxious about you.'

'My dear Elizabeth, your sympathy is thrown away on me. As I have told you already, I am over-tired—nothing more.'

She was relieved to hear that I had no mental troubles to complain of. 'Fatigue,' she remarked, 'sets itself right with rest. Did you take a very long walk?'

'Yes.'

'Beyond the limits of the town, of course? Philip has been taking a walk in the country, too. He doesn't say that he met you.'

These clever people sometimes overreach themselves. How she suggested it to me, I cannot pretend to have discovered. But I did certainly suspect that she had led Philip, while they were together downstairs, into saying to her what he had already said to Miss Jillgall. I was so angry that I tried to pump my excel-

lent friend, as she had been trying to pump me—a vulgar expression, but vulgar writing is such a convenient way of writing sometimes. My first attempt to entrap the Masseuse failed completely. She coolly changed the subject.

‘Have I interrupted you in writing?’ she asked, pointing to my Diary.

‘No; I was idling over what I have written already—an extraordinary story which I copied from a book.’

‘May I look at it?’

I pushed the open Diary across the table. If I was the object of any suspicions which she wanted to confirm, it would be curious to see if the poisoning story helped her. ‘It’s a piece of family history,’ I said; ‘I think you will agree with me that it is really interesting.’

She began to read. As she went on, not all her power of controlling herself could prevent

her from turning pale. This change of colour (in such a woman) a little alarmed me. When a girl is devoured by deadly hatred of a man, does the feeling show itself to other persons in her face? I must practise before the glass, and train my face into a trustworthy state of discipline.

‘Coarse melodrama!’ Mrs. Tenbruggen declared. ‘Mere sensation. No analysis of character. A made-up story!’

‘Well made up, surely?’ I answered.

‘I don’t agree with you.’ Her voice was not quite so steady as usual. She asked suddenly if my clock was right—and declared that she should be late for an appointment. On taking leave she pressed my hand strongly—eyed me with distrustful attention—and said very emphatically: ‘Take care of yourself, Helena; pray take care of yourself.’

I am afraid I did a very foolish thing when I showed her the poisoning story. Has it

helped the wily old creature to look into my inmost thoughts?

Impossible !

To-day, Miss Jillgall returned, looking hideously healthy and spitefully cheerful. Although she tried to conceal it, while I was present, I could see that Philip has recovered his place in her favour. After what he had said to her behind the hedge at the farm, she would be relieved from all fear of my becoming his wife, and would joyfully anticipate his marriage to Eunice. There are thoughts in me which I don't set down in my book. I only say : We shall see.

This afternoon, I decided on visiting the doctor.

The servant was quite sorry for me when he answered the door. His master had just left the house for a round of visits. I said I would wait. The servant was afraid I should

find waiting very tedious. I reminded him that I could go away if I found it tedious. At last, the polite old man left me.

I went into the consulting-room, and read the backs of the medical books ranged round the walls, and found a volume that interested me. There was such curious information in it that I amused myself by making extracts, using the first sheets of paper that I could find. They had printed directions at the top, which showed that the doctor was accustomed to write his prescriptions on them. We had many, too many, of his prescriptions in our house.

The servant's doubts of my patience proved to have been well-founded. I got tired of waiting, and went home before the doctor returned.

From morning to night, nothing has been seen of Mrs. Tenbruggen to-day. Nor has any apology for her neglect of us been received,

fond as she is of writing little notes. Has that story in my diary driven her away? Let me see what to-morrow may bring forth.

To-day has brought forth—nothing. Mrs. Tenbruggen still keeps away from us. It looks as if my diary had something to do with the mystery of her absence.

I am not in good spirits to-day. My nerves—if I have such things, which is more than I know by my own experience—have been a little shaken by a horrid dream. The medical information, which my thirst for knowledge absorbed in the doctor's consulting-room, turned traitor—armed itself with the grotesque horrors of nightmare — and so thoroughly frightened me that I was on the point of being foolish enough to destroy my notes. I thought better of it, and my notes are safe under lock and key.

Mr. Philip Dunboyne is trying to pave the

way for his flight from this house. He speaks of friends in London, whose interest will help him to find the employment which is the object of his ambition. 'In a few days more,' he said, 'I shall ask for leave of absence.'

Instead of looking at me, his eyes wandered to the window; his fingers played restlessly with his watch-chain while he spoke. I thought I would give him a chance, a last chance, of making the atonement that he owes to me. This shows shameful weakness, on my part. Does my own resolution startle me? Or does the wretch appeal—to what? To my pity? It cannot be my love; I am positively sure that I hate him. Well, I am not the first girl who has been an unanswerable riddle to herself.

'Is there any other motive for your departure?' I asked.

'What other motive can there be?' he replied.

I put what I had to say to him in plainer words still. 'Tell me, Philip, are you beginning to wish that you were a free man again ?'

He still prevaricated. Was this because he is afraid of me, or because he is not quite brute enough to insult me to my face ? I tried again for the third and last time. I almost put the words into his mouth.

'I fancy you have been out of temper lately,' I said. 'You have not been your own kinder and better self. Is this the right interpretation of the change that I think I see in you ?'

He answered : 'I have not been very well lately.'

'And that is all ?'

'Yes—that is all.'

There was no more to be said ; I turned away to leave the room. He followed me to the door. After a momentary hesitation, he made the attempt to kiss me. I only looked

at him—he drew back from me in silence. I left the new Judas, standing alone, while the shades of evening began to gather over the room.

Third Period (*continued*).

*EVENTS IN THE FAMILY RELATED BY MISS
JILLGALL.*

CHAPTER LVIII.

DANGER.

‘IF anything of importance happens, I trust to you to write an account of it, and to send the writing to me. I will come to you at once, if I see reason to believe that my presence is required.’

Those lines, in your last kind reply to me, rouse my courage, dear Mr. Governor, and sharpen the vigilance which has always been one of the strong points in my character. Every suspicious circumstance which occurs in this house will be (so to speak) seized on by my pen, and will find itself (so to speak again) placed on its trial, before your un-

erring judgment. Let the wicked tremble !
I mention no names.

Taking up my narrative where it came to an end, when I last wrote, I have to say a word first on the subject of my discoveries, in regard to Philip's movements.

The advertisement of a private inquiry office, which I read in a newspaper, put the thing into my head. I provided myself with money to pay the expenses by—I blush while I write it—pawning my watch. This humiliation of my poor self has been rewarded by success. Skilled investigation has proved that our young man has come to his senses again, exactly as I supposed. On each occasion when he was suspiciously absent from the house, he has been followed to the farm. I have been staying there myself for a day or two, in the hope of persuading Eunice to relent. The hope has not yet been realized. But Philip's devotion, assisted by my influence, will yet prevail. Let us not despair.

Whether Helena knows positively that she has lost her wicked hold on Philip I cannot say. It seems hardly possible that she could have made the discovery just yet. The one thing of which I am certain is, that she looks like a fiend.

Philip has wisely taken my advice, and employed pious fraud. He will get away from the wretch, who has tempted him once and may tempt him again, under pretence of using the interest of his friends in London to find a place under Government. He has not been very well for the last day or two, and the execution of our project is in consequence delayed.

I have news of Mrs. Tenbruggen which will, I think, surprise you.

She has kept away from us in a most unaccountable manner. I called on her at the hotel, and heard she was engaged with her lawyer. On the next day, she suddenly re-

turned to her old habits, and paid the customary visit. I observed a similar alteration in her state of feeling. She is now coldly civil to Helena ; and she asks after Eunice with a maternal interest touching to see. I said to her : ‘ Elizabeth, you appear to have changed your opinion of the two girls, since I saw you.’ She answered, with a delightful candour which reminded me of old times : ‘ Completely!’ I said : ‘ A woman of your intellectual calibre, dear, doesn’t change her mind without a good reason for it.’ Elizabeth cordially agreed with me. I ventured to be a little more explicit : ‘ You have no doubt made some interesting discovery.’ Elizabeth agreed again ; and I ventured again : ‘ I suppose I may not ask what the discovery is?’ ‘ No, Selina, you may not ask.’

This is curious ; but it is nothing to what I have got to tell you next. Just as I was longing to take her to my bosom again as my

friend and confidant, Elizabeth has disappeared. And, alas! alas! there is a reason for it which no sympathetic person can dispute.

I have just received some overwhelming news, in the form of a neat parcel, addressed to myself.

There has been a scandal at the hotel. That monster in human form, Elizabeth's husband, is aware of his wife's professional fame, has heard of the large sums of money which she earns as the greatest living professor of Massage, has been long on the lookout for her, and has discovered her at last. He has not only forced his way into her sitting-room at the hotel: he insists on her living with him again; her money being the attraction, it is needless to say. If she refuses, he threatens her with the law—the barbarous law which, to use his own coarse expression, will 'restore his conjugal rights.'

All this I gather from the narrative of my

unhappy friend, which forms one of the two enclosures in her parcel. She has already made her escape. Ha! the man doesn't live who can circumvent Elizabeth. The English Court of Law isn't built which can catch her when she roams the free and glorious Continent.

The vastness of this amazing woman's mind is what I must pause to admire. In the frightful catastrophe that has befallen her, she can still think of Philip and Euneece. She is eager to hear of their marriage, and renounces Helena with her whole heart. 'I too was deceived by that cunning young woman,' she writes. 'Beware of her, Selina. Unless I am much mistaken, she is going to end badly. Take care of Philip, take care of Euneece. If you want help, apply at once to my favourite hero in real life, The Governor.' I don't presume to correct Elizabeth's language. I should have called you The Idol of the Women.

The second enclosure contains, as I suppose, a wedding present. It is carefully sealed—it feels no bigger than an ordinary letter—and it contains an inscription which your highly-cultivated intelligence may be able to explain. I copy it as follows :

‘To be enclosed in another envelope, addressed to Mr. Dunboyne the elder, at Percy’s Private Hotel, London, and delivered by a trustworthy messenger, on the day when Mr. Philip Dunboyne is married to Miss Eunice Gracedieu. Placed meanwhile under the care of Miss Selina Jillgall.’

Why is this mysterious letter to be sent to Philip’s father ? I wonder whether that circumstance will puzzle you as it has puzzled me.

I have kept my report back, so as to send you the last news relating to Philip’s state of health. To my great regret, his illness seems

to have made a serious advance since yesterday. When I ask if he is in pain, he says: 'It isn't exactly pain ; I feel as if I was sinking. Sometimes I am giddy ; and sometimes I find myself feeling thirsty and sick.' I have no opportunity of looking after him as I could wish ; for Helena insists on nursing him, assisted by the housemaid. Maria is a very good girl in her way, but too stupid to be of much use. If he is not better to-morrow, I shall insist on sending for the doctor.

He is no better ; and he wishes to have medical help. Helena doesn't seem to understand his illness. It was not until Philip had insisted on seeing him that she consented to send for the doctor.

You had some talk with this experienced physician when you were here, and you know what a clever man he is. When I tell you

that he hesitates to say what is the matter with Philip, you will feel as much alarmed as I do. I will wait to send this to the post until I can write in a more definite way.

Two days more have passed. The doctor has put two very strange questions to me.

He asked, first, if there was anybody staying with us besides the regular members of the household. I said we had no visitor. He wanted to know next, if Mr. Philip Dunboyne had made any enemies since he has been living in our town. I said none that I knew of—and I took the liberty of asking what he meant. He answered to this, that he has a few more inquiries to make, and that he will tell me what he means to-morrow.

For God's sake come here as soon as you possibly can. The whole burden is thrown on me—and I am quite unequal to it.

I received the doctor to-day in the drawing-room. To my amazement, he begged leave to speak with me in the garden. When I asked why, he answered : ‘ I don’t want to have a listener at the door. Come out on the lawn, where we can be sure that we are alone.’

When we were in the garden, he noticed that I was trembling.

‘ Rouse your courage, Miss Jillgall,’ he said. ‘ In the Minister’s helpless state there is nobody whom I can speak to but yourself.’

I ventured to remind him that he might speak to Helena as well as to myself.

He looked as black as thunder when I mentioned her name. All he said was, ‘ No!’ But, oh, if you had heard his voice—and he so gentle and sweet-tempered at other times—you would have felt, as I did, that he had Helena in his mind!

‘ Now, listen to this,’ he went on. ‘ Everything that my art can do for Mr. Philip

Dunboyne, while I am at his bedside, is undone while I am away by some other person. He is worse to-day than I have seen him yet.'

'Oh, sir, do you think he will die?'

'He will certainly die unless the right means are taken to save him, and taken at once. It is my duty not to flinch from telling you the truth. I have made a discovery since yesterday which satisfies me that I am right. Somebody is trying to poison Mr. Dunboyne; and somebody will succeed unless he is removed from this house.'

I am a poor feeble creature. The doctor caught me, or I should have dropped on the grass. It was not a fainting-fit. I only shook and shivered so that I was too weak to stand up. Encouraged by the doctor, I recovered sufficiently to be able to ask him where Philip was to be taken to. He said: 'To the hospital. No poisoner can follow my patient

there. Persuade him to let me take him away, when I call again in an hour's time.'

As soon as I could hold a pen, I sent a telegram to you. Pray, pray come by the earliest train. I also telegraphed to old Mr. Dunboyne, at the hotel in London.

It was impossible for me to face Helena; I own I was afraid. The cook kindly went upstairs to see who was in Philip's room. It was the housemaid's turn to look after him for a while. I went instantly to his bedside.

There was no persuading him to allow himself to be taken to the hospital. 'I am dying,' he said. 'If you have any pity for me, send for Euneece. Let me see her once more, let me hear her say that she forgives me, before I die.'

I hesitated. It was too terrible to think of Euneece in the same house with her sister. Her life might be in danger! Philip gave me

a look, a dreadful ghastly look. 'If you refuse,' he said wildly, 'the grave won't hold me. I'll haunt you for the rest of your life.'

'She shall hear that you are ill,' I answered—and ran out of the room before he could speak again.

What I had promised to write, I did write. But, placed between Euneece's danger and Philip's danger, my heart was all for Euneece. Would Helena spare her, if she came to Philip's bedside? In such terror as I never felt before in my life, I added a word more, entreating her not to leave the farm. I promised to keep her regularly informed on the subject of Philip's illness; and I mentioned that I expected the Governor to return to us immediately. 'Do nothing,' I wrote, 'without his advice.' My letter having been completed, I sent the cook away with it, in a chaise. She belonged to the neighbourhood, and she knew the farmhouse well.

Nearly two hours afterwards, I heard the chaise stop at the door, and ran out, impatient to hear how my sweet girl had received my letter. God help us all! When I opened the door, the first person whom I saw was Euneece herself.

CHAPTER LIX.

DEFENCE.

ONE surprise followed another, after I had encountered Euneece at the door.

When my fondness had excused her for setting the well-meant advice in my letter at defiance, I was conscious of expecting to see her in tears ; eager, distressingly eager, to hear what hope there might be of Philip's recovery. I saw no tears, I heard no inquiries. She was pale, and quiet, and silent. Not a word fell from her when we met, not a word when she kissed me, not a word when she led the way into the nearest room—the dining-room. It was only when we were shut in together that she spoke.

‘Which is Philip’s room?’ she asked.

Instead of wanting to know how he was, she desired to know where he was! I pointed towards the back dining-room, which had been made into a bedroom for Philip. He had chosen it himself, when he first came to stay with us, because the window opened into the garden, and he could slip out and smoke at any hour of the day or night, when he pleased.

‘Who is with him now?’ was the next strange thing this sadly-changed girl said to me.

‘Maria is taking her turn,’ I answered; ‘she assists in nursing Philip.’

‘Where is——?’ Euneece got no farther than that. Her breath quickened, her colour faded away. I had seen people look as she was looking now, when they suffered under some sudden pain. Before I could offer to help her, she rallied, and went on: ‘Where,’ she began again, ‘is the other nurse?’

‘You mean Helena?’ I said.

‘I mean the Poisoner.’

When I remind you, dear Mr. Governor, that my letter had carefully concealed from her the horrible discovery made by the doctor, your imagination will picture my state of mind. She saw that I was overpowered. Her sweet nature, so strangely frozen up thus far, melted at last. ‘You don’t know what I have heard,’ she said, ‘you don’t know what thoughts have been roused in me.’ She left her chair, and sat on my knee with the familiarity of the dear old times, and took the letter that I had written to her from her pocket.

‘Look at it yourself,’ she said, ‘and tell me if anybody could read it, and not see that you were concealing something. My dear, I have driven round by the doctor’s house—I have seen him—I have persuaded him, or perhaps I ought to say surprised him, into telling me

the truth. But the kind old man is obstinate. He wouldn't believe me when I told him I was on my way here to save Philip's life. He said : " My child, you will only put your own life in jeopardy. If I had not seen that danger, I should never have told you of the dreadful state of things at home. Go back to the good people at the farm, and leave the saving of Philip to me. "'

' He was right, Eunece, entirely right.'

' No, dear, he was wrong. I begged him to come here, and judge for himself ; and I ask you to do the same.'

I was obstinate. ' Go back !' I persisted. ' Go back to the farm !'

' Can I see Philip ?' she asked.

I have heard some insolent men say that women are like cats. If they mean that we do, figuratively speaking, scratch at times, I am afraid they are not altogether wrong. An irresistible impulse made me say to poor

Euneece : ‘ This is a change indeed, since you refused to receive Philip.’

‘ Is there no change in the circumstances ?’ she asked sadly. ‘ Isn’t he ill and in danger ?’

I begged her to forgive me ; I said I meant no harm.

‘ I gave him up to my sister,’ she continued, ‘ when I believed that his happiness depended, not on me, but on her. I take him back to myself, when he is at the mercy of a demon who threatens his life. Come, Selina, let us go to Philip.’

She put her arm round me, and made me get up from my chair. I was so easily persuaded by her, that the fear of what Helena’s jealousy and Helena’s anger might do was scarcely present in my thoughts. The door of communication was locked, on the side of the bedchamber. I went into the hall, to enter Philip’s room by the other door. She followed, waiting behind me. I heard

what passed between them when Maria went out to her.

‘Where is Miss Gracedieu?’

‘Resting upstairs, Miss, in her room.’

‘Look at the clock, and tell me when you expect her to come down here.’

‘I am to call her, Miss, in ten minutes more.’

‘Wait in the dining-room, Maria, till I come back to you.’

She joined me. I held the door open for her to go into Philip’s room. It was not out of curiosity; the feeling that urged me was sympathy, when I waited a moment to see their first meeting. She bent over the poor, pallid, trembling, suffering man, and raised him in her arms, and laid his head on her bosom. ‘My Philip!’ She murmured those words in a kiss. I closed the door; I had a good cry; and, oh, how it comforted me!

There was only a minute to spare when she

came out of the room. Maria was waiting for her. Euneece said, as quietly as ever : ‘Go, and call Miss Gracedieu.’

The girl looked at her, and saw—I don’t know what. Maria became alarmed. But she went up the stairs, and returned in haste to tell us that her young mistress was coming down.

The faint rustling of Helena’s dress as she left her room reached us in the silence. I remained at the open door of the dining-room, and Maria approached and stood near me. We were both frightened. Euneece stepped forward, and stood on the mat at the foot of the stairs, waiting. Her back was towards me ; I could only see that she was as still as a statue. The rustling of the dress came nearer. Oh, Heavens ! what was going to happen ? My teeth chattered in my head ; I held by Maria’s shoulder. Drops of perspiration showed themselves on the girl’s forehead ;

she stared in vacant terror at the slim little figure, posted firm and still on the mat.

Helena turned the corner of the stairs, and waited a moment on the last landing, and saw her sister.

‘You here?’ she said. ‘What do you want?’

There was no reply. Helena descended, until she reached the last stair but one. There, she stopped. Her staring eyes grew large and wild: her hand shook as she stretched it out, feeling for the bannister; she staggered as she caught at it, and held herself up. The silence was still unbroken. Something in me, stronger than myself, drew my steps along the hall, nearer and nearer to the stair, till I could see the face which had struck that murderous wretch with terror.

I looked.

No! it was not my sweet girl; it was a

horrid transformation of her. I saw a fearful creature, with glittering eyes that threatened some unimaginable vengeance. Her lips were drawn back ; they showed her clenched teeth. A burning red flush dyed her face. The hair of her head rose, little by little, slowly. And, most dreadful sight of all, she seemed, in the stillness of the house, to be *listening to something*. If I could have moved, I should have fled to the first place of refuge I could find. If I could have raised my voice, I should have cried for help. I could do neither the one nor the other. I could only look, look, look ; held by the horror of it with a hand of iron.

Helena must have roused her courage, and resisted her terror. I heard her speak :

‘ Let me by !’

‘ No.’

Slowly, steadily, in a whisper, Euneccc made that reply.

Helena tried once more—still fighting against her own terror ; I knew it by the trembling of her voice :

‘ Let me by,’ she repeated ; ‘ I am on my way to Philip’s room.’

‘ You will never enter Philip’s room again.’

‘ Who will stop me ?’

‘ I will.’

She had spoken in the same steady whisper throughout—but now she moved. I saw her set her foot on the first stair. I saw the horrid glitter in her eyes flash close into Helena’s face. I heard her say :

‘ Poisoner, go back to your room.’

Silent and shuddering, Helena shrank away from her—daunted by her glittering eyes ; mastered by her lifted hand pointing up the stairs.

Helena slowly ascended till she reached the landing. She turned and looked down ; she tried to speak. The pointing hand struck her

dumb, and drove her up the next flight of stairs. She was lost to view. Only the small rustling sound of the dress was to be heard, growing fainter and fainter ; then an interval of stillness ; then the noise of a door opened and closed again ; then no sound more—but a change to be seen : the transformed creature was crouching on her knees, still and silent, her face covered by her hands. I was afraid to approach her ; I was afraid to speak to her. After a time, she rose. Suddenly, swiftly, with her head turned away from me, she opened the door of Philip's room—and was gone.

I looked round. There was only Maria in the lonely hall. Shall I try to tell you what my sensations were ? It may sound strangely, but it is true—I felt like a sleeper, who has half awakened from a dream.

CHAPTER LX.

DISCOVERY.

A LITTLE later, on that eventful day, when I was most in need of all that your wisdom and kindness could do to guide me, came the telegram which announced that you were helpless under an attack of gout. As soon as I had in some degree got over my disappointment, I remembered having told Euneece in my letter that I expected her kind old friend to come to us. With the telegram in my hand, I knocked softly at Philip's door.

The voice that bade me come in was the gentle voice that I knew so well. Philip was sleeping. There, by his bedside, with his

hand resting in her hand, was Eunece, so completely restored to her own sweet self that I could hardly believe what I had seen, not an hour since. She talked of you, when I showed her your message, with affectionate interest and regret. Look back, my admirable friend, at what I have written on the two or three pages which precede this, and explain the astounding contrast if you can.

I was left alone to watch by Philip, while Eunece went away to see her father. Soon afterwards, Maria took my place; I had been sent for to the next room to receive the doctor.

He looked care-worn and grieved. I said I was afraid he had brought bad news with him.

‘The worst possible news,’ he answered. ‘A terrible exposure threatens this family, and I am powerless to prevent it.’

He then asked me to remember the day when I had been surprised by the singular

questions which he had put to me, and when he had engaged to explain himself after he had made some inquiries. Why, and how, he had set those inquiries on foot, was what he had now to tell. I will repeat what he said, in his own words, as nearly as I can remember them. While he was in attendance on Philip, he had observed symptoms which made him suspect that *Digitalis* had been given to the young man, in doses often repeated. Cases of attempted poisoning by this medicine were so rare, that he felt bound to put his suspicions to the test by going round among the chemists' shops — excepting of course the shop at which his own prescriptions were made up — and asking if they had lately dispensed any preparation of *Digitalis*, ordered perhaps in a larger quantity than usual. At the second shop he visited, the chemist laughed. 'Why, doctor,' he said, 'have you forgotten your own prescription?' After this,

the prescription was asked for, and produced. It was on the paper used by the doctor—paper which had his address printed at the top, and a notice added, telling patients who came to consult him for the second time to bring their prescriptions with them. Then, there followed in writing: ‘Tincture of Digitalis, one ounce’—with his signature at the end, not badly imitated, but a forgery nevertheless. The chemist noticed the effect which this discovery had produced on the doctor, and asked if that was his signature. He could hardly, as an honest man, have asserted that a forgery was a signature of his own writing. So he made the true reply, and asked who had presented the prescription. The chemist called to his assistant to come forward. ‘Did you tell me that you knew, by sight, the young lady who brought this prescription?’ The assistant admitted it. ‘Did you tell me she was Miss Helena

Gracedieu ?' 'I did.' 'Are you sure of not having made any mistake?' 'Quite sure.' The chemist then said : 'I myself supplied the Tincture of Digitalis, and the young lady paid for it, and took it away with her. You have had all the information that I can give you, sir ; and I may now ask, if you can throw any light on the matter.' Our good friend thought of the poor Minister, so sorely afflicted, and of the famous name so sincerely respected in the town and in the country round, and said he could not undertake to give an immediate answer. The chemist was excessively angry. 'You know as well as I do,' he said, 'that Digitalis, given in certain doses, is a poison, and you cannot deny that I honestly believed myself to be dispensing your prescription. While you are hesitating to give me an answer, my character may suffer ; I may be suspected myself.' He ended in declaring he should consult his lawyer. The

doctor went home, and questioned his servant. The man remembered the day of Miss Helena's visit in the afternoon, and the intention that she expressed of waiting for his master's return. He had shown her into the parlour which opened into the consulting-room. No other visitor was in the house at that time, or had arrived during the rest of the day. The doctor's own experience, when he got home, led him to conclude that Helena had gone into the consulting-room. He had entered that room, for the purpose of writing some prescriptions, and had found the leaves of paper that he used diminished in number. After what he had heard, and what he had discovered (to say nothing of what he suspected, it occurred to him to look along the shelves of his medical library. He found a volume (treating of Poisons) with a slip of paper left between the leaves ; the poison described at the place so marked being *Digitalis*, and the

paper used being one of his own prescription-papers. 'If, as I fear, a legal investigation into Helena's conduct is a possible event,' the doctor concluded, 'there is the evidence that I shall be obliged to give, when I am called as a witness.'

It is my belief that I could have felt no greater dismay, if the long arm of the Law had laid its hold on me while he was speaking. I asked what was to be done.

'If she leaves the house at once,' the doctor replied, 'she may escape the infamy of being charged with an attempt at murder by poison; and, in her absence, I can answer for Philip's life. I don't urge you to warn her, because that might be a dangerous thing to do. It is for you to decide, as a member of the family, whether you will run the risk.'

I tried to speak to him of Euneece, and to tell him what I had already related to yourself. He was in no humour to listen to me.

‘Keep it for a fitter time,’ he answered ; ‘and think of what I have just said to you.’ With that, he left me, on his way to Philip’s room.

Mental exertion was completely beyond me. Can you understand a poor middle-aged spinster being frightened into doing a dangerous thing ? That may seem to be nonsense. But if you ask why I took a morsel of paper, and wrote the warning which I was afraid to communicate by word of mouth—why I went upstairs with my knees knocking together, and opened the door of Helena’s room just wide enough to let my hand pass through—why I threw the paper in, and banged the door to again, and ran downstairs as I have never run since I was a little girl—I can only say, in the way of explanation, what I have said already : I was frightened into doing it.

What I have written, thus far, I shall send to you by to-night’s post.

The doctor came back to me, after he had

seen Philip, and spoken with Euneece. He was very angry ; and, I must own, not without reason. Philip had flatly refused to let himself be removed to the hospital ; and Euneece—‘ a mere girl ’—had declared that she would be answerable for consequences ! The doctor warned me that he meant to withdraw from the case, and to make his declaration before the magistrates. At my entreaties he consented to return in the evening, and to judge by results before taking the terrible step that he had threatened.

While I remained at home on the watch, keeping the doors of both rooms locked, Euneece went out to get Philip’s medicine. She came back, followed by a boy carrying a portable apparatus for cooking. ‘ All that Philip wants, and all that we want,’ she explained, ‘ we can provide for ourselves. Give me a morsel of paper to write on.’

Unhooking the little pencil attached to her

watch-chain, she paused, and looked towards the door. ‘Somebody listening,’ she whispered. ‘Let them listen.’ She wrote a list of necessaries, in the way of things to eat and things to drink, and asked me to go out and get them myself. ‘I don’t doubt the servants,’ she said, speaking distinctly enough to be heard outside ; ‘but I am afraid of what a Poisoner’s cunning and a Poisoner’s desperation may do, in a kitchen which is open to her.’ I went away on my errand—discovering no listener outside, I need hardly say. On my return, I found the door of communication with Philip’s room closed, but no longer locked. ‘We can now attend on him in turn,’ she said, ‘without opening either of the doors which lead into the hall. At night we can relieve each other, and each of us can get sleep as we want it in the large arm-chair in the dining-room. Philip must be safe under our charge, or the doctor will insist on taking

him to the hospital. When we want Maria's help, from time to time, we can employ her under our own superintendence. Have you anything else, Selina, to suggest ?

There was nothing left to suggest. Young and inexperienced as she was, how (I asked) had she contrived to think of all this ? She answered simply : ' I'm sure I don't know ; my thoughts came to me while I was looking at Philip.'

Soon afterwards I found an opportunity of inquiring if Helena had left the house. She had just rung her bell ; and Maria had found her, quietly reading, in her room. Hours afterwards, when I was on the watch at night, I heard Philip's door softly tried from the outside. Her dreadful purpose had not been given up, even yet.

The doctor came in the evening, as he had promised, and found an improvement in Philip's health. I mentioned what precautions

we had taken, and that they had been devised by Euneece. 'Are you going to withdraw from the case?' I asked. 'I am coming back to the case,' he answered, 'to-morrow morning.'

It had been a disappointment to me to receive no answer to the telegram which I had sent to Mr. Dunboyne the elder. The next day's post brought the explanation in a letter to Philip from his father, directed to him at the hotel here. This showed that my telegram, giving my address at this house, had not been received. Mr. Dunboyne announced that he had returned to Ireland, finding the air of London unendurable, after the sea-breezes at home. If Philip had already married, his father would leave him to a life of genteel poverty with Helena Gracedieu. If he had thought better of it, his welcome was waiting for him.

Little did Mr. Dunboyne know what

changes had taken place since he and his son had last met, and what hope might yet present itself of brighter days for poor Eunece! I thought of writing to him. But how would that crabbed old man receive a confidential letter from a lady who was a stranger?

My doubts were set at rest by Philip himself. He asked me to write a few lines of reply to his father; declaring that his marriage with Helena was broken off—that he had not given up all hope of being permitted to offer the sincere expression of his penitence to Eunece—and that he would gladly claim his welcome, as soon as he was well enough to undertake the journey to Ireland. When he had signed the letter, I was so pleased that I made a smart remark. I said, ‘This is a treaty of peace between father and son.’

When the doctor arrived in the morning,

and found the change for the better in his patient confirmed, he did justice to us at last. He spoke kindly, and even gratefully, to Euneece. No more allusions to the hospital as a place of safety escaped him. He asked me cautiously for news of Helena. I could only tell him that she had gone out at her customary time, and had returned at her customary time. He did not attempt to conceal that my reply had made him uneasy.

‘Are you still afraid that she may succeed in poisoning Philip?’ I asked.

‘I am afraid of her cunning,’ he said. ‘If she is charged with attempting to poison young Dunboyne, she has some system of defence, you may rely on it, for which we are not prepared. There, in my opinion, is the true reason for her extraordinary insensibility to her own danger.’

Two more days passed, and we were still safe under the protection of lock and key.

On the evening of the second day (which was a Monday) Maria came to me, in great tribulation. On inquiring what was the matter, I received a disquieting reply : ‘ Miss Helena is tempting me. She is so miserable at being prevented from seeing Mr. Philip, and helping to nurse him, that it is quite distressing to see her. At the same time, Miss, it’s hard on a poor servant. She asks me to take the key secretly out of the door, and lend it to her at night for a few minutes only. I’m really afraid I shall be led into doing it, if she goes on persuading me much longer.’

I commended Maria for feeling scruples which proved her to be the best of good girls, and promised to relieve her from all fear of future temptation. This was easily done. Euneece kept the key of Philip’s door in her pocket ; and I kept the key of the dining-room door in mine.

CHAPTER LXI.

ATROCITY.

ON the next day, a Tuesday in the week, an event took place which Euneece and I viewed with distrust. Early in the afternoon, a young man called with a note for Helena. It was to be given to her immediately, and no answer was required.

Maria had just closed the house door, and was on her way upstairs with the letter, when she was called back by another ring at the bell. Our visitor was the doctor. He spoke to Maria in the hall :

‘ I think I see a note in your hand. Was it given to you by the young man who has just left the house ?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘If he’s your sweetheart, my dear, I have nothing more to say.’

‘Good gracious, doctor, how you do talk! I never saw the young man before in my life.’

‘In that case, Maria, I will ask you to let me look at the address. Aha! Mischief!’

The moment I heard that, I threw open the dining-room door. Curiosity is not easily satisfied. When it hears, it wants to see; when it sees, it wants to know. Every lady will agree with me in this observation.

‘Pray come in,’ I said.

‘One minute, Miss Jillgall. My girl, when you give Miss Helena that note, try to get a sly look at her when she opens it, and come and tell me what you have seen.’ He joined me in the dining-room, and closed the door. ‘The other day,’ he went on, ‘when I told you what I had discovered in the chemist’s shop, I think I mentioned a young man who was

called to speak to a question of identity—an assistant who knew Miss Helena Gracedieu by sight.'

'Yes, yes !'

'That young man left the note which Maria has just taken upstairs.'

'Who wrote it, doctor, and what does it say ?'

'Questions naturally asked, Miss Jillgall—and not easily answered. Where is Eunice ? Her quick wit might help us.'

She had gone out to buy some fruit and flowers for Philip.

The doctor accepted his disappointment resignedly. 'Let us try what we can do without her,' he said. 'That young man's master has been in consultation (you may remember why) with his lawyer, and Helena may be threatened by an investigation before the magistrates. If this wild guess of mine turns out to have hit the mark, the poisoner upstairs has got a warning.'

I asked if the chemist had written the note. Foolish enough of me when I came to think of it. The chemist would scarcely act a friendly part towards Helena, when she was answerable for the awkward position in which he had placed himself. Perhaps the young man who had left the warning was also the writer of the warning. The doctor reminded me that he was all but a stranger to Helena. 'We are not usually interested,' he remarked, 'in a person whom we only know by sight.'

'Remember that he is a young man,' I ventured to say. This was a strong hint, but the doctor failed to see it. He had evidently forgotten his own youth. I made another attempt.

'And vile as Helena is,' I continued, 'we cannot deny that this disgrace to her sex is a handsome young lady.'

He saw it at last. 'Woman's wit!' he cried. 'You have hit it, Miss Jillgall. The young

fool is smitten with her, and has given her a chance of making her escape.'

'Do you think she will take the chance?'

'For all our sakes, I pray God she may! But I don't feel sure about it.'

'Why?'

'Recollect what you and Eunice have done. You have shown your suspicion of her without an attempt to conceal it. If you had put her in prison you could not have more completely defeated her infernal design. Do you think she is a likely person to submit to that, without an effort to be even with you.'

Just as he said those terrifying words, Maria came back to us. He asked at once what had kept her so long upstairs.

The girl had evidently something to say, which had inflated her (if I may use such an expression) with a sense of her own importance.

'Please to let me tell it, sir,' she answered,

‘in my own way. Miss Helena turned as pale as ashes when she opened the letter, and then she took a turn in the room, and then she looked at me with a smile—well, Miss, I can only say that I felt that smile in the small of my back. I tried to get to the door. She stopped me. She says: “Where’s Miss Eunice?” I says: “Gone out.” She says: “Is there anybody in the drawing-room?” I says: “No, Miss.” She says: “Tell Miss Jillgall I want to speak to her, and say I am waiting in the drawing-room.” It’s every word of it true! And, if a poor servant may give an opinion, I don’t like the look of it.’

The doctor dismissed Maria. ‘Whatever it is,’ he said to me, ‘you must go and hear it.’

I am not a courageous woman; I expressed myself as being willing to go to her, if the doctor went with me. He said that was impossible; she would probably refuse to speak before any witness; and certainly

before him. But he promised to look after Philip in my absence, and to wait below if it really so happened that I wanted him. I need only ring the bell, and he would come to me the moment he heard it. Such kindness as this roused my courage, I suppose. At any rate, I went upstairs.

She was standing by the fireplace, with her elbow on the chimney-piece, and her head resting on her hand. I stopped just inside the door, waiting to hear what she had to say. In this position her side-face only was presented to me. It was a ghastly face. The eye that I could see turned wickedly on me when I came in—then turned away again. Otherwise, she never moved. I confess I trembled, but I did my best to disguise it.

She broke out suddenly with what she had to say : ‘ I won’t allow this state of things to go on any longer. My horror of an exposure which will disgrace the family has kept me

silent, wrongly silent, so far. Philip's life is in danger. I am forgetting my duty to my affianced husband, if I allow myself to be kept away from him any longer. Open those locked doors, and relieve me from the sight of you. Open the doors, I say, or you will both of you—you the accomplice, she the wretch who directs you—repent it to the end of your lives.'

In my own mind, I asked myself if she had gone mad. But I only answered: 'I don't understand you.'

She said again: 'You are Eunice's accomplice.'

'Accomplice in what?' I asked.

She turned her head slowly, and faced me. I shrank from looking at her.

'All the circumstances prove it,' she went on. 'I have supplanted Eunice in Philip's affection. She was once engaged to marry him; I am engaged to marry him now. She

is resolved that he shall never make me his wife. He will die if I delay any longer. He will die if I don't crush her, like the reptile she is. She comes here—and what does she do? Keeps him prisoner under her own superintendence. Who gets his medicine? She gets it. Who cooks his food? She cooks it. The doors are locked. I might be a witness of what goes on; and I am kept out. The servants who ought to wait on him are kept out. She can do what she likes with his medicine; she can do what she likes with his food: she is infuriated with him for deserting her, and promising to marry me. Give him back to my care, or, dreadful as it is to denounce my own sister, I shall claim protection from the magistrates.'

I lost all fear of her: I stepped close up to the place at which she was standing; I cried out: 'Of what, in God's name, do you accuse your sister?'

She answered : 'I accuse her of poisoning Philip Dunboyne.'

I ran out of the room ; I rushed headlong down the stairs. The doctor heard me, and came running into the hall. I caught hold of him like a madwoman. 'Euneece!' My breath was gone ; I could only say : 'Euneece !'

He dragged me into the dining-room. There was wine on the side-board, which he had ordered medically for Philip. He forced me to drink some of it. It ran through me like fire ; it helped me to speak. 'Now tell me,' he said, 'what has she done to Eunice ?'

'She brings a horrible accusation against her,' I answered.

'What is the accusation ?'

I told him.

He looked me through and through. 'Take care!' he said. 'No hysterics, no exaggeration. You may lead to dreadful consequences

if you are not sure of yourself. If it's really true, say it again.'

I said it again—quietly, this time.

His face startled me ; it was white with rage. He snatched his hat off the hall table.

'What are you going to do?' I asked.

'My duty.'

He was out of the house before I could speak to him again.



Third Period (*concluded*).

*TROUBLES AND TRIUMPHS OF THE FAMILY,
RELATED BY THE GOVERNOR.*



CHAPTER LXII.

THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED.

MARTYRS to gout know, by sad experience, that they suffer under one of the most capricious of maladies. An attack of this disease will shift, in the most unaccountable manner, from one part of the body to another; or, it will release the victim when there is every reason to fear that it is about to strengthen its hold on him; or, having shown the fairest promise of submitting to medical treatment, it will cruelly lay the patient prostrate again in a state of relapse. Adverse fortune, in my case, subjected me to this last and worst trial of endurance. Two months

passed—months of pain aggravated by anxiety—before I was able to help Eunice and Miss Jillgall personally with my sympathy and advice.

During this interval, I heard regularly from the friendly and faithful Selina.

Terror and suspense, courageously endured day after day, seem to have broken down her resistance, poor soul, when Eunice's good name and Eunice's tranquillity were threatened by the most infamous of false accusations. From that time, Miss Jillgall's method of expressing herself betrayed a gradual deterioration. I shall avoid presenting at a disadvantage a correspondent who has claims on my gratitude, if I give the substance only of what she wrote—assisted by the newspapers which she sent to me, while the legal proceedings were in progress.

Honest indignation does sometimes counsel us wisely. When the doctor left Miss Jillgall,

in anger and in haste, he had determined on taking the course from which, as a humane man and a faithful friend, he had hitherto recoiled. It was no time, now, to shrink from the prospect of an exposure. The one hope of successfully encountering the vindictive wickedness of Helena lay in the resolution to be beforehand with her, in the appeal to the magistrates with which she had threatened Eunice and Miss Jillgall. The doctor's sworn information stated the whole terrible case of the poisoning, ranging from his first suspicions and their confirmation, to Helena's atrocious attempt to accuse her innocent sister of her own guilt. So firmly were the magistrates convinced of the serious nature of the case thus stated, that they did not hesitate to issue their warrant. Among the witnesses whose attendance was immediately secured, by the legal adviser to whom the doctor applied, were the farmer and his wife.

Helena was arrested while she was dressing to go out. Her composure was not for a moment disturbed. 'I was on my way,' she said coolly, 'to make a statement before the justices. The sooner they hear what I have to say the better.'

The attempt of this shameless wretch to 'turn the tables' on poor Eunice—suggested, as I afterwards discovered, by the record of family history which she had quoted in her journal—was defeated with ease. The farmer and his wife proved the date at which Eunice had left her place of residence under their roof. The doctor's evidence followed. He proved, by the production of his professional diary, that the discovery of the attempt to poison his patient had taken place before the day of Eunice's departure from the farm, and that the first improvement in Mr. Philip Dunboyne's state of health had shown itself, after that young lady's arrival to perform the duties

of a nurse. To the wise precautions which she had taken—perverted by Helena to the purpose of a false accusation—the doctor attributed the preservation of the young man's life.

Having produced the worst possible impression on the minds of the magistrates, Helena was remanded. Her legal adviser had predicted this result ; but the vindictive obstinacy of his client had set both experience and remonstrance at defiance.

At the renewed examination, the line of defence adopted by the prisoner's lawyer proved to be—mistaken identity.

It was asserted that she had never entered the chemist's shop ; also, that the assistant had wrongly identified some other lady as Miss Helena Gracedieu ; also, that there was not an atom of evidence to connect her with the stealing of the doctor's prescription-paper and the forgery of his writing. Other assertions

to the same purpose followed, on which it is needless to dwell. The case for the prosecution was, happily, in competent hands. With the exception of one witness, cross-examination afforded no material help to the evidence for the defence.

The chemist swore positively to the personal appearance of Helena, as being the personal appearance of the lady who had presented the prescription. His assistant, pressed on the question of identity, broke down under cross-examination—purposely, as it was whispered, serving the interests of the prisoner. But the victory, so far gained by the defence, was successfully contested by the statement of the next witness, a respectable tradesman in the town. He had seen the newspaper report of the first examination, and had volunteered to present himself as a witness. A member of Mr. Gracedieu's congregation, his pew in the chapel was so situated as to give him a view of

the minister's daughters occupying their pew. He had seen the prisoner on every Sunday, for years past ; and he swore that he was passing the door of the chemist's shop, at the moment when she stepped out into the street, having a bottle covered with the customary white paper in her hand. The doctor and his servant were the next witnesses called. They were severely cross-examined. Some of their statements—questioned technically with success—received unexpected and powerful support, due to the discovery and production of the prisoner's diary. The entries, guardedly as some of them were written, revealed her motive for attempting to poison Philip Dunboyne ; proved that she had purposely called on the doctor when she knew that he would be out, that she had entered the consulting-room, and examined the medical books, had found (to use her own written words) ' a volume that interested her,' and had used the prescription-papers for the

purpose of making notes. The notes themselves were not to be found ; they had doubtless been destroyed. Enough, and more than enough, remained to make the case for the prosecution complete. The magistrates committed Helena Gracedieu for trial at the next assizes.

I arrived in the town, as well as I can remember, about a week after the trial had taken place.

Found guilty, the prisoner had been recommended to mercy by the jury—partly in consideration of her youth ; partly, as an expression of sympathy and respect for her unhappy father. The judge (a father himself) passed a lenient sentence. She was condemned to imprisonment for two years. The careful matron of the gaol had provided herself with a bottle of smelling-salts, in the fear that there might be need for it when Helena heard her sentence pronounced. Not the slightest sign

of agitation appeared in her face or her manner. She lied to the last; asserting her innocence in a firm voice, and returning from the dock to the prison without requiring assistance from anybody.

Relating these particulars to me, in a state of ungovernable excitement, good Miss Jillgall ended with a little confession of her own, which operated as a relief to my overburdened mind after what I had just heard.

‘I wouldn’t own it,’ she said, ‘to anybody but a dear friend. One thing, in the dreadful disgrace that has fallen on us, I am quite at a loss to account for. Think of Mr. Gracedieu’s daughter being one of those criminal creatures, on whom it was once your terrible duty to turn the key! Why didn’t she commit suicide?’

‘My dear lady, no thoroughly wicked creature ever yet committed suicide. Self-destruction, when it is not an act of madness,

implies some acuteness of feeling—sensibility to remorse or to shame, or perhaps a distorted idea of making atonement. There is no such thing as remorse, or shame, or hope of making atonement, in Helena's nature.'

'But when she comes out of prison, what will she do?'

'Don't alarm yourself, my good friend. She will do very well.'

'Oh, hush! hush! Poetical justice, Mr. Governor!'

'Poetical fiddlesticks, Miss Jillgall.'

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE OBSTACLE REMOVED.

WHEN the subject of the trial was happily dismissed, my first inquiry related to Eunice. The reply was made with an ominous accompaniment of sighs and sad looks. Eunice had gone back to her duties as governess at the farm. Hearing this, I asked naturally what had become of Philip.

Melancholy news, again, was the news that I now heard.

Mr. Dunboyne the elder had died suddenly, at his house in Ireland, while Philip was on his way home. When the funeral ceremony had come to an end, the will was read. It had

been made only a few days before the testator's death ; and the clause which left all his property to his son was preceded by expressions of paternal affection, at a time when Philip was in sore need of consolation. After alluding to a letter, received from his son, the old man added : ' I always loved him, without caring to confess it ; I detest scenes of sentiment, kissings, embracings, tears, and that sort of thing. But Philip has yielded to my wishes, and has broken off a marriage which would have made him, as well as me, wretched for life. After this, I may speak my mind from my grave, and may tell my boy that I loved him. If the wish is likely to be of any use, I will add (on the chance)—God bless him.'

' Does Philip submit to separation from Eunice ? ' I asked. ' Does he stay in Ireland ? '

' Not he, poor fellow ! He will be here, to-morrow or next day. When I last wrote,' Miss Jillgall continued, ' I told him I hoped to

see you again soon. If you can't help us (I mean with Eunice) that unlucky young man will do some desperate thing. He will join those madmen at large who disturb poor savages in Africa, or go nowhere to find nothing in the Arctic regions.'

'Whatever I can do, Miss Jillgall, shall be gladly done. Is it really possible that Eunice refuses to marry him, after having saved his life?'

'A little patience, please, Mr. Governor; let Philip tell his own story. If I try to do it, I shall only cry—and we have had tears enough lately, in this house.'

Further consultation being thus deferred, I went upstairs to the Minister's room.

He was sitting by the window, in his favourite armchair, absorbed in knitting! The person who attended on him, a good-natured patient fellow, had been a sailor in his younger days, and had taught Mr. Grace-

dieu how to use the needles. 'You see it amuses him,' the man said kindly. 'Don't notice his mistakes ; he thinks there isn't such another in the world for knitting as himself. You can see, sir, how he sticks to it.' He was so absorbed over his employment that I had to speak to him twice, before I could induce him to look at me. The utter ruin of his intellect did not appear to have exercised any disastrous influence over his bodily health. On the contrary, he had grown fatter since I had last seen him ; his complexion had lost the pallor that I remembered—there was colour in his cheeks. 'Don't you remember your old friend ?' I said. He smiled, and nodded, and repeated the words : 'Yes, yes, my old friend.' It was only too plain that he had not the least recollection of me. 'His memory is gone,' the man said. 'When he puts away his knitting, at night, I have to find it for him in the morning. But, there ! he's happy—'

enjoys his victuals, likes sitting out in the garden and watching the birds. 'There's been a deal of trouble in the family, sir ; and it has all passed over him like a wet sponge over a slate.' The old sailor was right. If that wreck of a man had been capable of feeling and thinking, his daughter's disgrace would have broken his heart. In a world of sin and sorrow, is peaceable imbecility always to be pitied ? I have known men who would have answered, without hesitation : 'It is to be envied.' And where (some persons might say) was the poor Minister's reward for the act of mercy which had saved Eunice in her infancy ? Where it ought to be ! A man who worthily performs a good action finds his reward in the action itself.

At breakfast, on the next day, the talk touched on those passages in Helena's diary, which had been produced in court as evidence against her.

I expressed a wish to see what revelation of a depraved nature the entries in the diary might present ; and my curiosity was gratified. At a fitter time, I may find an opportunity of alluding to the impression produced on me by the diary. In the meanwhile, the event of Philip's return claims notice in the first place.

The poor fellow was so glad to see me that he shook hands as heartily as if we had known each other from the time when he was a boy.

‘Do you remember how kindly you spoke to me, when I called on you in London?’ he asked. ‘If I have repeated those words once—but perhaps you don’t remember them? You said: “If I was as young as you are, I should not despair.” Well! I have said that to myself over and over again, for a hundred times at least. Eunice will listen to you, sir, when she will listen to nobody else. This is the first happy moment I have had for weeks past.’

I suppose I must have looked glad to hear that. Anyway, Philip shook hands with me again.

Miss Jillgall was present. The gentle-hearted old maid was so touched by our meeting that she abandoned herself to the genial impulse of the moment, and gave Philip a kiss. The outraged claims of propriety instantly seized on her. She blushed as if the long-lost days of her girlhood had been found again, and ran out of the room.

‘Now, Mr. Philip,’ I said. ‘I have been waiting, at Miss Jillgall’s suggestion, to get my information from you. There is something wrong between Eunice and yourself. What is it? And who is to blame?’

‘Her vile sister is to blame,’ he answered. ‘That reptile was determined to sting us. And she has done it!’ he cried, starting to his feet, and walking up and down the room, urged into action by his own unendurable

sense of wrong. 'I say, she has done it, after Eunice has saved me—done it, when Eunice was ready to be my wife.'

'How has she done it?'

Between grief and indignation his reply was involved in a confusion of vehemently-spoken words, which I shall not attempt to reproduce. Eunice had reminded him that her sister had been publicly convicted of an infamous crime, and publicly punished for it by imprisonment. 'If I consent to marry you,' she said, 'I stain you with my disgrace; that shall never be.' With this resolution she had left him. 'I have tried to convince her,' Philip said, 'that she will not be associated with her sister's disgrace when she bears my name; I have promised to take her far away from England, among people who have never even heard of her sister. Miss Jillgall has used her influence to help me. All in vain! There is no hope for us but in you. I am not thinking selfishly

only of myself. She tries to conceal it—but, oh, she is broken-hearted! Ask the farmer's wife, if you don't believe me. Judge for yourself, sir. Go—for God's sake, go to the farm.'

I made him sit down and compose himself.

'You may depend on my going to the farm,' I answered. 'I shall write to Eunice to-day, and follow my letter to-morrow.' He tried to thank me; but I would not allow it. 'Before I consent to accept the expression of your gratitude,' I said, 'I must know a little more of you than I know now. This is only the second occasion on which we have met. Let us look back a little, Mr. Philip Dunboyne. You were Eunice's affianced husband; and you broke faith with her. That was a rascally action. How do you defend it?'

His head sank. 'I am ashamed to defend it,' he answered.

I pressed him without mercy. 'You own

yourself,' I said, 'that it was a rascally action ?'

'Use stronger language against me, even than that, sir—I deserve it.'

'In plain words,' I went on, 'you can find no excuse for your conduct ?'

'In the past time,' he said, 'I might have found excuses.'

'But you can't find them now ?'

'I must not even look for them now.'

'Why not ?'

'I owe it to Eunice to leave my conduct at its worst ; with nothing said—by me—to defend it.'

'What has Eunice done to have such a claim on you as that ?'

'Eunice has forgiven me.'

It was gratefully and delicately said. Ought I to have allowed this circumstance to weigh with me ? I ask, in return, had *I* never committed any faults ? As a fellow mortal and

fellow sinner, had I any right to harden my heart against an expression of penitence which I felt to be sincere in its motive ?

But I was bound to think of Eunice. I did think of her, before I ventured to accept the position—the critical position, as I shall presently show—of Philip's friend.

After more than an hour of questions put without reserve, and of answers given without prevarication, I had travelled over the whole ground laid out by the narratives which appear in these pages, and had arrived at my conclusion—so far as Philip Dunboyne was concerned.

I found him to be a man with nothing absolutely wicked in him—but with a nature so perilously weak, in many respects, that it might drift into wickedness unless a stronger nature was at hand to hold it back. Married to a wife without force of character, the probabilities would point to him as likely to yield

to examples which might make him a bad husband. Married to a wife with a will of her own, and with true love to sustain her—a wife who would know when to take the command, and how to take the command—a wife who, finding him tempted to commit actions unworthy of his better self, would be far-sighted enough to perceive that her husband's sense of honour might sometimes lose its balance, without being on that account hopelessly depraved—then, and in these cases only, the probabilities would point to Philip as a man likely to be the better and the happier for his situation, when the bonds of wedlock had got him.

But the serious question was not answered yet.

Could I feel justified in placing Eunice in the position towards Philip which I have just endeavoured to describe? I dared not allow my mind to dwell on the generosity which had

so nobly pardoned him, or on the force of character which had bravely endured the bitterest disappointment, the cruellest humiliation. The one consideration which I was bound to face, was the sacred consideration of her happiness in her life to come.

Leaving Philip, with a few words of sympathy which might help him to bear his suspense, I went to my room to think.

The time passed—and I could arrive at no positive conclusion. Either way—with or without Philip—the contemplation of Eunice's future harassed me with doubt. Even if I had conquered my own indecision, and had made up my mind to sanction the union of the two young people, the difficulties that now beset me would not have been dispersed. Knowing what I alone knew, I could certainly remove Eunice's one objection to the marriage. In other words, I had only to relate what had happened on the day when the Chaplain

brought the Minister to the prison, and the obstacle to their union would be removed. But, without considering Philip, it was simply out of the question to do this, in mercy to Eunice herself. What was Helena's disgrace, compared with the infamy which stained the name of the poor girl's mother? The other alternative of telling her part of the truth only was before me, if I could persuade myself to adopt it. I failed to persuade myself; my morbid anxiety for her welfare made me hesitate again. Human patience could endure no more. Rashness prevailed, and prudence yielded—I left my decision to be influenced by the coming interview with Eunice.

The next day, I drove to the farm. Philip's entreaties persuaded me to let him be my companion, on one condition—that he waited in the carriage while I went into the house.

I had carefully arranged my ideas, and had decided on proceeding with the greatest

caution, before I ventured on saying the all-important words which, once spoken, were not to be recalled. The worst of those anxieties, under which the delicate health of Mr. Gracedieu had broken down, was my anxiety now. Could I reconcile it to my conscience to permit a man, innocent of all knowledge of the truth, to marry the daughter of a condemned murderess, without honestly telling him what he was about to do? Did I deserve to be pitied? did I deserve to be blamed?—my mind was still undecided when I entered the house.

She ran to meet me as if she had been my daughter; she kissed me as if she had been my daughter; she fondly looked up at me as if she had been my daughter. At the sight of that sweet young face, so sorrowful, and so patiently enduring sorrow, all my prepared talk, all my doubts and hesitations, everything artificial about me with which I had entered the room, vanished in an instant.

After she had thanked me for coming to see her, I saw her tremble a little. The uppermost interest in her heart was forcing its way outwards to expression, try as she might to keep it back. 'Have you seen Philip?' she asked. The tone in which she put that question decided me—I was resolved to let her marry him. Impulse? Yes, impulse, asserting itself inexcusably in a man at the end of his life. I ought to have known better than to have given way. Very likely. But am I the only mortal who ought to have known better—and did not?

When Eunice asked if I had seen Philip, I owned that he was outside in the carriage. Before she could reproach me, I went on with what I had to say: 'My child, I know what a sacrifice you have made; and I should honour your scruples, if you had any reason for feeling them.'

'Any reason for feeling them?' She turned pale as she repeated the words.

An idea came to me. I rang for the servant, and sent her to the carriage to tell Philip to come in. 'My dear, I am not putting you to any unfair trial,' I assured her; 'I am going to prove that I love you as truly as if you were my own child.'

When they were both present, I resolved that they should not suffer a moment of needless suspense. Standing between them, I took Eunice's hand, and laid my other hand on Philip's shoulder, and spoke out plainly.

'I am here to make you both happy,' I said. 'I can remove the only obstacle to your marriage, and I mean to do it. But I must insist on one condition. Give me your promise, Philip, that you will ask for no explanations, and that you will be satisfied with the one true statement, which is all that I can offer to you.'

He gave me his promise, without an instant's hesitation.

‘Philip grants what I ask,’ I said to Eunice.
‘Do you grant it, too?’

Her hand turned cold in mine; but she spoke firmly when she said: ‘Yes.’

I gave her into Philip’s care. It was his privilege to console and support her. It was my duty to say the decisive words:

‘Rouse your courage, dear Eunice; you are no more affected by Helena’s disgrace than I am. You are not her sister. Her father is not your father; her mother was not your mother. I was present, in the time of your infancy, when Mr. Gracedieu’s fatherly kindness received you as his adopted child. This, I declare to you both, on my word of honour, is the truth.’

How she bore it, I am not able to say. My foolish old eyes were filling with tears. I could just see plainly enough to find my way to the door, and leave them together.

In my reckless state of mind, I never asked

myself if Time would be my accomplice, and keep the part of the secret which I had not revealed—or be my enemy, and betray me. The chances, either way, were perhaps equal. The deed was done.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

THE marriage was deferred, at Eunice's request, as an expression of respect to the memory of Philip's father.

When the time of delay had passed, it was arranged that the wedding ceremony should be held—after due publication of Banns—at the parish church of the London suburb in which my house was situated. Miss Jillgall was bridesmaid, and I gave away the bride. Before we set out for the church, Eunice asked leave to speak with me for a moment in private.

‘Don't think,’ she said, ‘that I am forget-

ting my promise to be content with what you have told me about myself. I am not so ungrateful as that. But I do want, before I consent to be Philip's wife, to feel sure that I am not quite unworthy of him. Is it because I am of mean birth that you told me I was Mr. Gracedieu's adopted child—and told me no more?"

I could honestly satisfy her, so far. 'Certainly not!' I said.

She put her arms round my neck. 'Do you say that,' she asked, 'to make my mind easy? or do you say it on your word of honour?'

'On my word of honour.'

We arrived at the church. Let Miss Jillgall describe the marriage, in her own inimitable way.

'No wedding breakfast, when you don't want to eat it. No wedding speeches, when nobody wants to make them, and nobody

wants to hear them. And no false sentiment, shedding tears and reddening noses, on the happiest day in the whole year. A model marriage! I could desire nothing better, if I had any prospect of being a bride myself.'

They went away for their honeymoon to a quiet place by the seaside, not very far from the town in which Eunice had passed some of the happiest and the wretchedest days in her life. She persisted in thinking it possible that Mr. Gracedieu might recover the use of his faculties at the last, and might wish to see her on his death-bed. 'His adopted daughter,' she gently reminded me, 'is his only daughter now.' The doctor shook his head when I told him what Eunice had said to me—and, the sad truth must be told, the doctor was right.

Miss Jillgall returned, on the wedding-day, to take care of the good man who had befriended her in her hour of need.

Before the end of the week, I heard from her, and was disagreeably reminded of an incident which we had both forgotten, absorbed as we were in other and greater interests, at the time.

Mrs. Tenbruggen had again appeared on the scene! She had written to Miss Jillgall, from Paris, to say that she had heard of old Mr. Dunboyne's death, and that she wished to have the letter returned, which she had left for delivery to Philip's father on the day when Philip and Eunice were married. I had my own suspicions of what that letter might contain; and I regretted that Miss Jillgall had sent it back without first waiting to consult me. My misgivings, thus excited, were increased by more news of no very welcome kind. Mrs. Tenbruggen had decided on returning to her professional pursuits in England. Massage, now the fashion everywhere, had put money into her pocket among

the foreigners ; and her husband, finding that she persisted in keeping out of his reach, had consented to a compromise. He was ready to submit to a judicial separation ; in consideration of a little income which his wife had consented to settle on him, under the advice of her lawyer.

Some days later, I received a delightful letter from Philip and Eunice ; reminding me that I had engaged to pay them a visit at the seaside. My room was ready for me, and I was left to choose my own day. I had just begun to write my reply, gladly accepting the invitation, when an ominous circumstance occurred. My servant announced ‘a lady ;’ and I found myself face to face with—Mrs. Tenbruggen !

She was as cheerful as ever, and as eminently agreeable as ever.

‘I have heard it all from Selina,’ she said. ‘Philip’s marriage to Eunice (I shall go and

congratulate them, of course), and the catastrophe (how dramatic!) of Helena Gracedieu. I warned Selina that Miss Helena would end badly. To tell the truth, she frightened me. I don't deny that I am a mischievous woman when I find myself affronted, quite capable of taking my revenge in my own small spiteful way. But poison and murder—ah, the frightful subject; let us drop it, and talk of something that doesn't make my hair (it's really my own hair) stand on end. Has Selina told you that I have got rid of my charming husband, on easy pecuniary terms? Oh, you know that? Very well. I will tell you something that you don't know. Mr. Governor, I have found you out.'

'May I venture to ask how?'

'When I guessed which was which of those two girls,' she answered, 'and guessed wrong, you deliberately encouraged the mistake. Very clever, but you overdid it. From that

moment, though I kept it to myself, I began to fear I might be wrong. Do you remember Low Lanes, my dear sir? A charming old church. I have had another consultation with my lawyer. His questions led me into mentioning how it happened that I heard of Low Lanes. After looking again at his memorandum of the birth advertised in the newspaper—without naming the place—he proposed trying the church register at Low Lanes. Need I tell you the result? I know, as well as you do, that Philip has married the adopted child. He has had a mother-in-law who was hanged, and, what is more, he has the honour, through his late father, of being otherwise connected with the murderess by marriage—as his aunt !’

Bewilderment and dismay deprived me of my presence of mind. ‘How did you discover that?’ I was foolish enough to ask.

‘Do you remember when I brought the

baby to the prison ?' she said. ' The father—as I mentioned at the time—had been a dear and valued friend of mine. No person could be better qualified to tell me who had married his wife's sister. If that lady had been living, I should never have been troubled with the charge of the child. Any more questions ?'

' Only one. Is Philip to hear of this ?'

' Oh, for shame ! I don't deny that Philip insulted me grossly, in one way ; and that Philip's late father insulted me grossly, in another way. But Mamma Tenbruggen is a Christian. She returns good for evil, and wouldn't for the world disturb the connubial felicity of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Dunboyne.'

The moment the woman was out of my house, I sent a telegram to Philip to say that he might expect to see me that night. I caught the last train in the evening ; and I sat down to supper with those two harmless young creatures, knowing I must prepare the

husband for what threatened them, and weakly deferring it, when I found myself in their presence, until the next day. Eunice was, in some degree, answerable for this hesitation on my part. No one could look at her husband, and fail to see that he was a supremely happy man. But I detected signs of care in the wife's face.

Before breakfast the next morning I was out on the beach, trying to decide how the inevitable disclosure might be made. Eunice joined me. Now, when we were alone, I asked if she was really and completely happy. Quietly and sadly she answered : ' Not yet.'

I hardly knew what to say. My face must have expressed disappointment and surprise.

' I shall never be quite happy,' she resumed, ' till I know what it is that you kept from me on that memorable day. I don't like having a secret from my husband—though it is not *my* secret.'

‘Remember your promise,’ I said.

‘I don’t forget it,’ she answered. ‘I can only wish that my promise would keep back the thoughts that come to me in spite of myself.’

‘What thoughts?’

‘There is something, as I fear, in the story of my parents which you are afraid to confide to me. Why did Mr. Gracedieu allow me to believe, and leave everybody to believe, that I was his own child?’

‘My dear, I relieved your mind of those doubts, on the morning of your marriage.’

‘No. I was only thinking of myself, at that time. My mother—the doubt of *her* is the doubt that torments me now.’

‘What do you mean?’

She put her arm in mine, and held by it with both hands.

‘The mock-mother!’ she whispered. ‘Do you remember that dreadful Vision, that horrid

whispering temptation in the dead of night? *Was* it a mock-mother? Oh, pity me! I don't know who my mother was. One horrid thought about her is a burden on my mind. If she was a good woman, you who love me would surely have made me happy by speaking of her?

Those words decided me at last. Could she suffer more than she had suffered already, if I trusted her with the truth? I ran the risk. There was a time of silence that filled me with terror. The interval passed. She took my hand, and put it to her heart. 'Does it beat as if I was frightened?' she asked.

No! It was beating calmly.

'Does it relieve your anxiety?'

It told me that I had not surprised her. That unforgotten Vision of the night had prepared her for the worst, after the time when I had told her that she was an adopted child. 'I know,' I said, 'that those whispered tempta-

tions overpowered you again, when you and Helena met on the stairs, and you forbade her to enter Philip's room. And I know that love had conquered once more, when you were next seen sitting by Philip's bedside. Tell me—have you any misgivings now? Is there fear in your heart of the return of that tempting spirit in you, in the time to come?

‘Not while Philip lives!’

There, where her love was—there her safety was. And she knew it! She suddenly left me. I asked where she was going.

‘To tell Philip,’ was the reply.

She was waiting for me at the door, when I followed her to the house.

‘Is it done?’ I said.

‘It is done,’ she answered.

‘What did he say?’

‘He said: “My darling, if I could be fonder of you than ever, I should be fonder of you now.”’

I have been blamed for being too ready to confide to Philip the precious trust of Eunice's happiness. If that reply does not justify me, where is justification to be found ?

POSTSCRIPT.

Later in the day, Mrs. Tenbruggen arrived to offer her congratulations. She asked for a few minutes with Philip alone. As a cat elaborates her preparations for killing a mouse, so the human cat elaborated her preparations for killing Philip's happiness. He remained uninjured by her teeth and her claws. 'Somebody,' she said, 'has told you of it already ?' And Philip answered : ' Yes ; my wife.'

For some months longer, Mr. Gracedieu lingered. One morning, he said to Eunice : ' I want to teach you to knit. Sit by me, and see me do it.' His hands fell softly on his lap ; his head sank little by little on her shoulder. She could just hear him whisper :

‘How pleasant it is to sleep!’ Never was Death’s dreadful work more gently done.

Our married pair live now on the paternal estate in Ireland; and Miss Jillgall reigns queen of domestic affairs. I am still strong enough to pass my autumn holidays in that pleasant house.

At times, my memory reverts to Helena Gracedieu, and to what I discovered when I had seen her diary.

How little I knew of that terrible creature when I first met with her, and fancied that she had inherited her mother’s character! It was weak indeed to compare the mean vices of Mrs. Gracedieu with the diabolical depravity of her daughter. Here, the doctrine of hereditary transmission of moral qualities must own that it has overlooked the fertility (for growth of good and for growth of evil equally) which is inherent in human nature. There are virtues that exalt us, and vices that

degrade us, whose mysterious origin is, not in our parents, but in ourselves. When I think of Helena, I ask myself, where is the trace which reveals that the first murder in the world was the product of inherited crime?

The criminal left the prison, on the expiration of her sentence, so secretly that it was impossible to trace her. Some months later, Miss Jillgall received an illustrated newspaper published in the United States. She showed me one of the portraits in it.

‘Do you recognise the illustrious original?’ she asked, with indignant emphasis on the last two words. I recognised Helena. ‘Now read her new title,’ Miss Jillgall continued.

I read: ‘The Reverend Miss Gracedieu.’

The biographical notice followed. Here is an extract: ‘This eminent lady, the victim of a shocking miscarriage of justice in England, is now the distinguished leader of a new community in the United States. We hail in her

the great intellect which asserts the superiority of woman over man. In the first French Revolution, the attempt made by men to found a rational religion met with only temporary success. It was reserved for the mightier spirit of woman to lay the foundations more firmly, and to dedicate one of the noblest edifices in this city to the Worship of Pure Reason. Readers who wish for further information will do well to provide themselves with the Reverend Miss Gracedieu's Orations—the tenth edition of which is advertised in our columns.'

'I once asked you,' Miss Jillgall reminded me, 'what Helena would do when she came out of prison, and you said she would do very well. Oh, Mr. Governor, Solomon was nothing to You!'

THE END.

25 June 1922



